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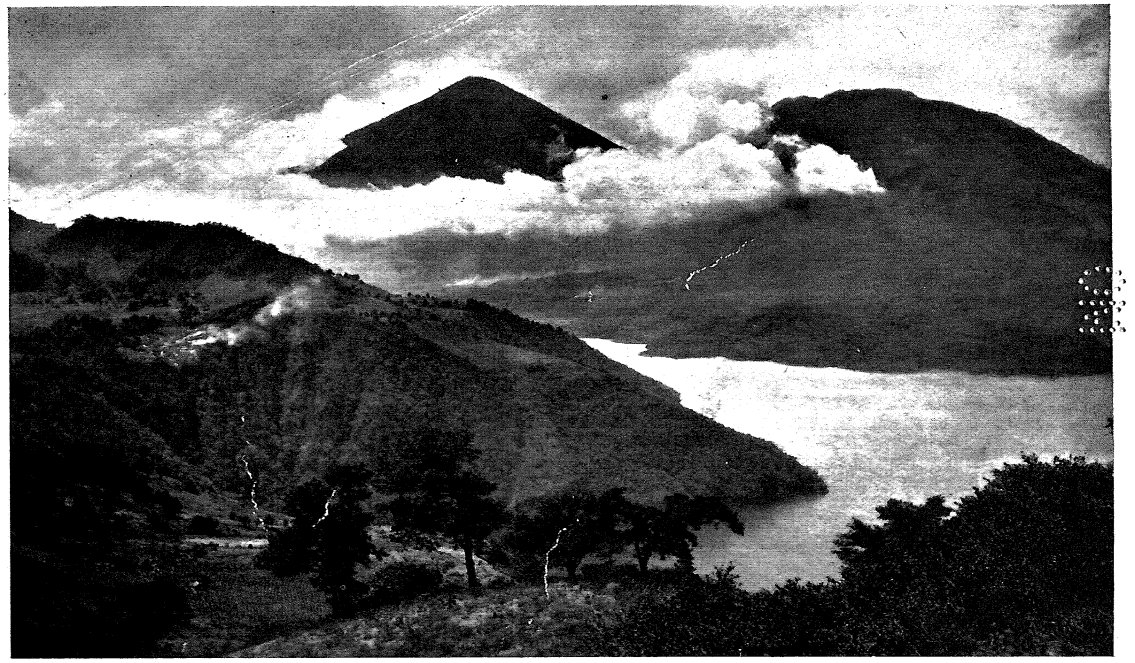
CENTRAL AMERICA



LAKE ATITLÁN AT EVENING, GUATEMALA

CENTRAL AMERICA

NEW PATHS IN ANCIENT LANDS

BY

L. E. ELLIOTT

F.R.G.S., F.R.A.I.

WITH THIRTY-ONE ILLUSTRATIONS AND A MAP

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To
T. A. J.

PREFACE

I OWE so many thanks to those kind people who gave me beautiful pictures, helped me upon my way, and gave me insight into the enchanted lands of Central America, aiding in the creation of this book, that I do not know where to begin. My gratitude reaches over many years and long paths : it includes a host of the gentle folk of Central America. *Que Diós se lo pague* !

But I must acknowledge my especial debt to Dr. A. P. Maudslay ; to Colonel F. H. Ward ; to Captain T. A. Joyce of the British Museum ; to Mr. Louis C. G. Clarke, Curator of the Museum of Ethnology, Cambridge ; Señor don Ricardo Fernández Guardia of Costa Rica ; Mr. and Mrs. T. A. Boissard of Guatemala ; Sir Claud and Lady Mallet, long of Panama ; Mr. Mervyn G. Palmer ; Dr. Thomas Gann ; and the Editor of *The Times*, London.

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L.E.E.

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CENTRAL AMERICA

CHAPTER I

BETWEEN TWO CONTINENTS

IT was my great good fortune to wander in and out of the engaging lands of Central America for a number of years that ran like coloured beads on a golden string. These pages are but a summing-up of those gipsy travellings, in lands where it is still an adventure to leave the main road, and where the small hardships of interior journeys add to their zest.

The triple charm of Central America is not a thing to put into cold print. It is insufficient to say that here is the mystery of ancient stone cities, buried in tropic jungle; that here is the grace of the Spanish colonial centuries; and that here are scenes of beauty that enchain the heart—forest, volcanoes, blue lakes and tempestuous rivers, bright birds and flowers. But for the railway routes, much of this country is less known, less visited by the white man, than in the seventeenth century in the days of the buccaneers, when Spain's forbidden land lured every hardy lad. Central America has no guide-books, no tourists' tickets; and this is my excuse for giving a few and brief details.

Between the two great continents of North and South America lies a little triangle of land. The territory of the United States of Mexico, running southward, dwindles below the limestone promontory of Yucatan: while the apex of South America runs to an angle at Colombia's north-west, pinching to the narrow belt of Darien. The tumbled, indented, mountainous land between, edged with reef and lagoon, is Central America, where the flora and fauna of the two big continents meet.

Chiapas, now a State of Mexico, invades the old Central

American area, in the north ; the present Republic of Panama takes a slim neck of land, 500 miles long, in the south. There remains, as political Central America, territory of about 177,000 square miles, divided into the five Republics of Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica ; and the little British colony of British Honduras, a slender strip of 9,000 square miles lying along the Caribbean coast, tucked under the southern wing of Yucatan, and backing on to the Petén region of Guatemala. The population of all these six divisions does not greatly exceed 5,000,000.

There is little in Central America that is quite new, and such modernity is found chiefly in the *enclaves* created by the Spaniards 400 years ago, and where other new-comers have added their special genius during the last century. In many and many a dreaming region one walks in the Age of Stone ; in others, every door opens into mediæval Spain. I do not say that there are no good railways, sanitation, telephones, modern farming and mining. There are, all honour to the energetic souls who brought them. But with what joy one finds " Indian " towns where no moving-picture has ever been seen, cascades that have never turned an industrial wheel, mountain paths where no railroad will ever run ; in these regions the native races dwell secure, living as they lived before Cortés and Alvarado came. I tender apologies for using the word " Indian," as I used it above, and as I must frequently use it in later pages, since there is no other comprehensive term for the indigenous folk of the Americas. It is a stupid term ; these people are not Indians. But the fault lies with Columbus, who insisted that these lands were the Indies whose spices the King of Spain wanted. The word has become implanted for ever in the vocabulary of the Americas, used as freely as, and more loosely than, the word Negro as applied to almost any African.

From all the great spaces of North and South America the native folk have been driven, most of them having conveniently " moved away to another more remote and shadowy region, not known to geographers," as Hudson says. Disposed of finally, their places have been filled by hardy European immi-

grants, the whole face of the land swept and garnished, wire-fenced, furnished with mills, factories and new cities. But in Central America there is little to attract big business, and neither space nor opportunity for the immigrant worker; foreigners come in small numbers, and, whether they return whence they came or remain to contribute their blood and ideas, the drop in the Central American bucket is still a small matter. For instance, in Guatemala, after four centuries of European entry, the population is still estimated as 80 to 90 per cent. of Indian blood, a sound basic stock whose healthy survival is of the first importance.

Speaking quite generally, for the rule is not invariable, the inhabitants of Central America are upland dwellers, hill folk; and thus the steamy Atlantic belt of the region offers the one great exception to the statement that manual workers are not wanted here. Upon these long green coasts there is a native population, chiefly of shy, sometimes semi-nomad, forest people, hunters and watermen ; but few are available for regular labour, and with the development within the last thirty years of immense, if ephemeral, banana plantations it has been found convenient to introduce hundreds of thousands of Negro field-hands, most of them from the British West Indian islands.

Looking at the map of Central America, one perceives that the region is at its broadest where Honduras and Nicaragua meet, at a line drawn fairly east and west from the Bay of Fonseca on the Pacific to Cape Gracias á Dios on the Caribbean. Here is a breadth of 300 miles and here is the least European-settled part of the five republics; the mountains run riot, breaking from their usual definite main line, creating a north-and-south running backbone peculiar to all the three Americas. This central cordillera has had from the earliest time when man appeared in Central America an influence upon his life that it would be difficult to over-estimate. The rocky ridge forms the great water-parting—and rivers are still the sole highways of many regions. It determines the climate, the class of vegetation, the spots where man can or cannot live, and, standing as it does, through the major part of Central

America, nearer to the Pacific than to the Atlantic coast, it creates three worlds.

To the west is the short, abrupt, dry descent, with its definite rainy season, June to October; to the east is the long, gentle, moist slope to the Caribbean, threaded by innumerable rivers, clothed with forest, subject to rains during a far longer period and at less clearly marked intervals. Between them are the high-held plateaux and fertile valleys, with their live craters and serene lakes, fostering a strong race. Here, wherever the highlands offered watered and pleasant vales, readily defended, the aboriginal folk founded their populous towns; the agricultural communities avoided the sweltering, fly-infested, fever-stricken Atlantic coast as the white man avoids it to-day, relinquishing it to the forestal hunting tribes. At the time of the Spanish Conquest, the only sea-level communities with great settled centres, organized and ruled by recognized chiefs, lay on the drier Pacific seaboard, as in the case of the densely-peopled Nicoya region of Costa Rica and the great groups of the lacustrine country of Nicaragua, where the withdrawal of the cordillera leaves a hot but dry, healthy, and productive plain.

Where these indigenous folk dwelt in great communities, there, and there alone, the conquering Spaniards established successfully their cities, formally laid out and consigned to the care of ghostly pastors and civic authorities. Attempts to found Spanish colonies in any other regions were doomed to speedy failure; the very names of a score of such foundations are sought vainly upon maps. Particularly was this superimposition successful in the central valleys of Mexico and Central America, where the native folk, artists, craftsmen and cultivators of the soil, bent before the storm of this invasion and thus survive, as the red man of the United States, and his brothers-in-arms the Araucanians of Chile, would not bend and have therefore broken.

Cortés completed his conquest of Mexico in 1521; after thirty years of, almost, marking time, with Spaniards in possession of the chief West Indian islands but making little effort towards lifting the veil to the westward, Panama had

been discovered, the Pacific sighted and reached, a few precarious colonies placed upon the north shore of South America. With the resounding fame of the conquest of Mexico a tremendous impetus was given to discovery, for this was the first golden reward of great adventure: Peru was not dreamed of, the embryo kingdom of the Chibcha was still secure within the upland fastnesses of Colombia. But when Cortés was able to take breath, to watch his new city of Mexico a-building, and think of new conquests, he had at hand a contingent of Spanish soldiers thoroughly equipped for such essays. They knew the magic influence of the mere sight of their horses upon the unhappy natives; they knew what poor weapons of wood with stone edges, and bows and arrows, what defences of quilted cotton doublets, were the limits of their opponents' fighting power; they knew the native idea of strategy. And, most powerful help, they had learned a smattering of the Nahuatl language, and had attached to themselves a number of Mexicans willing to serve as bearers and interpreters.

The importance of this experience is understood when we realize that some seventy years before the arrival of the Spaniards, during the reign of a powerful prince named Axayacatl, the grandfather of the Montezuma reigning at the time of Cortés' entry, military inroads had been made into Central American territory; these expeditions were consolidated by Montezuma's father, Ahuitzotl, and the Maya-Quiché of Guatemala, as well as, probably, the natives of regions still farther south, were placed under tribute. One of these tribute lists is in existence, showing that cotton cloth, pottery, gold, and the feathers of the quetzal, were amongst the contributions levied upon the Maya-Quiché. As an accompaniment of this comparatively light domination, the organized traders of the Aztecs, belonging to a guild known as the Pochteca, regularly traversed a route from Mexico into Guatemala and Salvador. And, as a final aid to the Spaniard in Central America, there had been long established colonies, enclaves, of Nahuatl-speaking people, from the north, throughout the Central American region. It is not known how long these Nahuatl groups had been planted amongst the Maya-Quiché, but it is certain that they were living in strong settled groups in two

regions of Guatemala ; in all Salvador ; along the Pacific coast between that sea and the great lakes, in Nicaragua ; and that there was a last little enclave, on the Caribbean side as an exception, upon the shores of Almirante Bay.

Thus the conquerors of Central America followed established trade routes, substituted tribute to the King of Spain for tribute to the ruler, and used native interpreters to make their meaning plain, interpreters who could and did explain to the Central Americans the expediency of, at least, pretended acquiescence. Whether these worshippers of the fair god from overseas, known to the Maya as Kukulkan, and identified with the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl whose expected return deceived the unfortunate Montezuma into accepting Cortés as his reincarnation, we do not know. It is more likely that by this time a pretty shrewd idea of the Spaniards' mortal weaknesses had filtered through to the by no means stupid Indians. But whatever they thought or guessed, their immediate fate was the same ; there is almost no record of their feelings or their ideas. Within a short time of the conquest there began to spring up a new generation of children, fathered by the Spaniard, mothered by the woman of native blood ; such children must have grown up at the mother's knee, learnt her speech, heard of her faith ; at the same time they were given the medium of Spanish speech to make themselves articulate to the new lords. Such mingling of blood and culture produced, in Mexico, the historian Ixtlilxochitl ; in Peru, the historian Garcilasso de la Vega. Both were concerned in depicting, no doubt with the help and at the suggestion of the missionary friars who were the only educators of the young, the past history of their kings and the status of society before the arrival of the Spaniard ; and, valuable as they are, both bear the impress of Spanish thought.

Central America yielded as a result of the same circumstances something more artless, more curiously redolent of the soil—the Quiché legendary history known as the Popol Vuh ; a brief résumé of the Popol Vuh will be found in later pages. It is a clearer record than the celebrated Books of Chilan Balam, of the Yucatec Maya, and of earlier date than another interesting record, the "Annals" of the Kakchiquel. All

are successors, if not inheritors, of that wonderful culture of the pure Maya, the ancient Maya of the heart of Central America, already vanished before the day of the Spaniard.

From his new empire of Mexico Cortés sent captains to conquer Central America, of which he had already received accounts; Pedro de Alvarado went down the west coast, by Soconusco and Chiapas, both afterwards part of the Captain-Generalcy of Guatemala, and took possession of Guatemala and Salvador, while Cristobal de Olid sailed to the coast of Honduras, to be later followed, overland, by Cortés himself with an army that penetrated the cruel swamps and forests of Tehuantepec, Campeachy and Petén, to the Golfo de Amatique. At the same time, Pedrarias in Panama was sending captains up the Pacific coast from the Isthmus, and thus were conquered Nicaragua and Costa Rica. By the end of 1526 all the five provinces of Central America were nominally subdued, and stock was taken of their possible yield in gold and silver, tobacco, dyes, medicinal herbs and gums, fine feathers, sugar and cacao. The seeds of maize were carried to Spain and Africa, and so readily was that fine cereal acclimatized that within thirty years of the Conquest it had spread all over the known world. Sweet potatoes were also grown in the warm Mediterranean regions, these "batatas" being the first potatoes that Europe put upon dinner-tables; it was not for another two hundred years that the potato we know to-day arrived from the West Coast of South America and came into favour.

Portugal had seized the Spice Isles of Ind and the slave-yielding coasts of Africa, but Spain was now in possession of the sources of streams of sugar and aromatic treasures, such as the markets of Europe coveted and could get only from these two countries. And when after 1580 Philip II added to his inheritance from Spain the crown of Portugal (with Manoel I's title of "Lord of the Conquest, Navigation, and Commerce of India, Ethiopia, Arabia and Persia"), he could count himself master of all Spain and Portugal, Sicily, Holland and Belgium, all North America except the French and English colonies, all South America and the West Indian islands, great slices of Africa, the Philippines, and a few other Pacific islands.

All this was more than Spain could manage, and more than a world which was already partly opposed in its Protestantism to Spain's ardent Catholicism could endure. Spain was drained of men to control and guard her great overseas possessions, and she could make no concessions to heretics; while the heretics looked across at the intriguing closed door of the tropic Americas and longed for secret glimpses. New Spain was the veiled woman of the globe. No news of her came out, no foreigner might enter her gates; the lure was irresistible, apart from the chance of great prizes. Scarcely had Spain discovered and sealed the Americas before raids began.

The era of the chartered captains such as Drake and Hawkins was followed by the age of the buccaneer; the coasts of the blue Caribbean offered every sort of invitation, for here came the yearly galleons of Spain, collecting precious metals from Peru, brought across the Isthmus of Panama to Portobello, or from New Granada (Colombia) to Cartagena de las Indias, or from the mines of New Spain to the Golfo Dulce of Guatemala, or Mexico's great port of Vera Cruz. All these ports were accessible from the sun-scorched cays and islands off the Central American coast, and there hundreds of the adventurers of the earth, with nothing to lose, laid wait, careened their boats, and made plans for the astounding captures with which they were so frequently rewarded.

Spain found herself obliged to allow her rivals certain privileges. She granted the Asiento—right to supply slaves on contract—to Holland's and England's West India companies; and allowing attendance at the annual Fair of Portobello in connexion with the Asiento, was presently persuaded into permitting merchandise to be brought also; the thin end of the wedge. For what the Casa de Contratación allowed to the national rivals of Spain had to be granted to other Spanish cities than those to which a monopoly of trading with the Americas was confined in early years; when the end of the eighteenth century arrived the colonies were enjoying more international traffic than is always realized.

The book of the Americas was so little open, however, that news of it was still a "best seller" in Europe. Drake's "World Encompassed" had had, at the end of the sixteenth

century, a *succès fou*; no less eagerly read were such productions of the seventeenth century as Esquemeling's "Bucaniers of America"; Dampier's "New Voyage Around the World"; the "New Voyage to America," of the pirate surgeon, Lionel Wafer; and the "Voyages and Adventures of Captain Bartholomew Sharp." And, while we pay tribute to the intrepidity, the gallantry, the splendid disregard of life and comfort, that marks the story of Spanish exploration, we may also remark upon the courage and resource of these buccaneers; they, too, made journeys that seem almost incredible to-day. Not only was Darien their familiar path, the dread navigation of the Strait of Magellan all in the day's work, an attack upon a fortified town or a great vessel a matter to be undertaken with a handful of cut-throats, but they launched themselves into the unknown without tremors. Think of that band of French and English pirates, for example, who in 1688 entered the Bay of Fonseca, marched ninety miles or so to the headwaters of the Wanks River, and negotiated its windings to the Caribbean. Buccaneering in the Americas served to develop hardihood just as the possession and management of those dominions developed in Spain such sciences as cartography, astronomy, navigation, studies of winds and currents, ship-construction, mining, and tropical agriculture.

The end of Spanish dominion came at the beginning of the nineteenth century, with the opportunity offered by the weakening of Spain's power through the activities of Napoleon. The ideas of the Spanish-Americans had been influenced by the French Revolution, the written works of the French encyclopædists, smuggled, in spite of every prohibition, into the colonies; and by the action of the North American colonies of England, after the menace of French aggression had been lifted by the conquest of Canada, and with the assistance of the French as a measure of retaliation. The new republic of the United States acted as an example; but the chief cause of the declaration of independence from the mother-country came not from without, but from within, and not from the indigenous peoples, from Mexico to Chile. The most bitter feeling against the Spain they had never seen, and the Spanish whom they did see, in the chief Government offices, was expressed by the

" creoles," born in the country, sometimes with both Spanish and native blood in their veins, sometimes of pure Spanish descent; in all cases, of Spanish tongue, faith and education, and thus equipped for the struggle as the Indians were not equipped.

This antagonism was remarked upon by both foreign and Spanish visitors to the Americas long before the breach came; that breach was, probably, inevitable, but the manner of its coming was more immediately injurious to the colonies than to Spain. The mother-country, when all was over, was left with a few West Indian islands, including the lovely and productive Cuba; with the Philippines and a few other islands of the Pacific; she was denuded as Portugal had likewise been denuded of India, most of her African territory, and great Brazil. But she stood at peace, while the colonies were plunged into long and sore troubles.

On the 15th of September, 1821, a group of people assembled in the palace of the Audiencia in the plaza of Guatemala and proclaimed independence from Spain. A provisional Junta then convoked a Constituent Assembly, and this, flushed with anti-clerical ideas, displayed so much illiberality that the powerful church party and the conservative aristocrats took alarm, and forcibly dispersed the assembly. Perceiving her own weakness, Guatemala proposed adhesion to Mexico; Salvador objected, and before the ink was dry upon the declaration of independence Guatemala found herself taking the field against a sister province. During the 300 years of colonial rule there had been no quarrel between the provinces.

Nicaragua split into two factions, Leon and Granada respectively supporting Guatemala and Salvador; Mexico sent troops flying the banners of the new Emperor, Iturbide, and in January of 1822 Guatemala (i.e. all Central America) was proclaimed incorporated with Mexico, and divided into three captaincies-general (Chiapas, Sacatepequez, and Nicaragua). Salvador was angered into a counter-proclamation, her congress declaring itself incorporated with the United States; but Washington remained indifferent, and Salvador turned the page and forgot it. For, with Chiapas throwing in her

lot with Mexico, the remaining five Central American provinces of Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Salvador and Costa Rica were illuminated with the excellent idea of federation, with Guatemala as the capital and seat of Government, where a President resided, while governors controlled the other states.

It is just possible that this federation might have been permanent. But it broke up, from causes worthy of the attention of the student of Central American affairs. Among the first acts of the new governments were proclamations of a number of new laws. Slavery, first, had been absolutely abolished; only a small minority of the inhabitants were white, but they were the controllers of the federation; and in freeing slaves they probably meant justice not only to the Negroes, but to the native races whose position of subjection had not been lightened by all the paternal laws repeatedly issued by Spain.

Laws affecting the church were introduced—monastic orders were abolished, nuns released from their vows, and the property of religious orders sequestrated; and here the "Liberals" went too far for the old native races of Guatemala. It was easy enough for the intellectuals to get along without the saints; but the humbler folk could not. These saints and the padres of the Roman Catholic Church had taken the place of the old Maya-Quiché gods and their attendant priests, and, with material conditions devoid of joy and freedom, the inclination of these folk towards the supernatural, their ancient habit of leaning upon the superior beings of the unseen world, had been strengthened. The rising of the Indians, the only great movement of these people for 300 years previously and for another century later, was a genuine outburst of feeling, a movement from the ground up.

The anti-clerical laws were not the only, although the chief, cause of popular distress; the introduction of trial by jury was hotly opposed—in fact, Central America would not have it; the man in the street had the greatest objection to being tried by his peers. Nor did they like the invitation to foreigners and the prospect of immigrants; and when they discovered that the new government wanted to collect taxes, just as mother Spain from whom they had revolted, their disillusion was complete. Into the details of the quarrels of the next

years it is not profitable to delve; but the actual break-up of the Central American federation in 1838 was definitely a great popular movement in favour of the Church, with the Quiché of the Altos of Guatemala in the van, inspired by an illiterate, able, tremendously energetic Indian youth, Rafael Carrera. With his Indian enthusiasts he beat the trained and well-equipped armies of the intellectual Liberal, Morazán; he reinstated the clerics; broke up the federation by closing the frontiers of Guatemala against her sisters; and, remaining in undisputed power from 1839 to 1865, did more for Guatemala's peace and prosperity than any succession of properly-elected presidents could have done. I am not sure that Central America's dictators have not been her best friends; and undoubtedly the fact that (counting Estrada Cabrera's twenty-two years of office) Guatemala only had six presidents between 1839 and 1920 has operated for peace denied to some of her sisters.

To Central America the first 300 years of European contact gave to nations living in the Stone Age the high Spanish civilization, with all its panoply of beautiful speech, feudal and legal and religious custom. New blood was also introduced: the Spanish element; the African element; and, to a degree more marked than history always recounts, Asiatic; for during the colonial period Japanese and Chinese merchants and artisans came frequently on the ships trading to the Philippines, and at one time the commerce of Acapulco and other Pacific ports was chiefly in the hands of Orientals. It is this mingling of bloods that creates, in Latin America, types of great interest. It was often with difficulty that I restrained myself from approaching some intriguing personality and begging to know his or her parentage.

The next century brought to Central America the mechanisms of an age of invention, all the extraordinary discoveries of the nineteenth century—so far as these new little countries could afford them. The same era of invention brought about the decay of commerce in natural dyes such as logwood and fustic, just as modern ideas of medicine had extinguished the demand of the Middle Ages for bezoar stones from Latin

America; but the rapid transport of the new steamships and railways accelerated such new industries as coffee culture, the most important commercial development of republican Central America. Heirs of the Spanish hidalgos, with a traditional love of the land and appreciation of the patriarchal dignity of the life of the planter, accepted new ideas in cultivation, just as they would accept and give their sons to new concepts in politics or the law; but the new growth of banking, engineering and transport and commerce was left to the foreigner. Groups of Europeans, and North Americans, entered, and many have identified themselves permanently with this enchanting region; it is pleasant to know that the British, usually substantial folk with a stake in the country, hold an enviable place in the regard of Central Americans.

Perhaps this regard is earned because, respecting the qualities of Central America, they are in return respected; and Latin America inherits the admiration of England for Spain. To the English, Spain has ever been a beautiful word, her forbidden grounds the alluring lands of romance; and in the days when England was the enemy she was the gallant enemy.

The story of Spanish adventure and discovery in the New World remains to-day dazzling, almost incredible, as it was 400 years ago. And here the adventurer, the discoverer, traversed the land of the live volcano; of palms and orchids that grow in no other region; of such a true bird of freedom as the quetzal, that can live in no other air; of shy folk of ancient speech, ancient goods. A sense of mystery is here. The world has ever been eager for the stuff of dreams. You may still find that gossamer in the lands of Central America, fair stepchild of Spain.

CHAPTER II

GUATEMALA: PUERTO BARRIOS TO THE CAPITAL

Puerto Barrios—Swamp and Tropical Forest—Cohune Palms—The Motagua River—Banana Plantations—Ruins of Quiriguá—The Indian Hut—Los Amates—Train to the Capital—Zacapa—Rise to the City—"Indians"—Mountains and Vegetation—City at Night—Earthquakes.

SWINGING lazily at her anchor, the steamer lies outside Puerto Barrios in the velvet darkness before dawn. When the first flush of rose suddenly floods the sky and turns the indigo sea to silken purple one sees the port revealed,—a long wooden pier, a cluster of wooden buildings aloft upon stilts, rising from a green swamp, screened in the distance by a wall of blue and green mountains. These great slopes garlanded with wandering, capricious mist, clothed half-way to the summit with sweltering jungle, come shouldering down to the edge of the Caribbean; they are the Sierra de Minas and the Sierra de Mico.

Here is Guatemala's tropic gateway, the steamy coast that masks the cool bright highlands of the interior, just as Guayaquil belies the grassy heights and snow crowns of Quito; deadly fevers have been banished, but Barrios is not an attractive port. It came into being when the railway between sea and capital was built thirty years ago. Before that time travellers disembarked at Port Izabal on the Rio Dulce, crossed the Sierra de Minas on mule-back to reach to the same Valley of the Motagua that offers a pathway for the railroad. The disintegrating effects of perpetual damp heat are visible upon the pier and upon the official buildings; but since good luck permits you to catch the daily train that starts for the uplands at six-thirty, you need not so much as

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see the inside of the wooden hotel. He who travels the interior of Central America will soon enough become accustomed to sleeping upon cot beds or in hammocks, ignoring such trifles as bed-linen, and faring sumptuously upon black beans and *tortillas*.

A smile and a pleasant word addressed to the really gorgeously-uniformed Customs officer makes light of the ceremony of inspection, and you find yourself comfortably installed in a chair upon the back platform of the observation car; from this point of vantage you presently look out upon fantastic scenes of tropic forest and river. This is the real thing! The wild and splendid jungle of one's dreams. Here rise gigantic trunks, their buttresses like walls of defence; far above, these enormous trees hold aloft their heads of scented flowers, gold and mauve and pink, while pendant from sixty or seventy feet hangs a tangled curtain of lianas. The scarlet flash of tillandsias punctuates the predominating green, and from the black ooze of the swamp rises a mass of lush lilies, with dainty white blossoms like little ghosts in the semi-dark of the forest, the forest that stands embattled upon either side of the track. Looking upon the tremendous and eternal struggle of this army of growth, where scarcely any animal life is to be seen but where a heavy-winged, huge blue butterfly flutters over a pool, one realizes again the courage and resource of those Spanish conquerors who, four hundred years ago, first sighted and forced a way through Central American jungle.

With few breaks but, here and there, a clearing where cassava and plantains surround an insouciant Negro dwelling, this forest continues all the way to, and beyond, the strange stone ruins of Quiriguá. To visit Quiriguá, you must leave the train at a forest station, where the big banana-growing company has a sort of permanent settlement and a hospital, and a room or two for visitors. The workers upon the banana plantations are Negroes, and, what is more, they are almost exclusively British West Indians from Jamaica and Barbados and Trinidad, contracted by the American employer for three reasons: first, because there is a big surplus of labour in the West Indian islands; next, because there is no native labour

available in the hot lowlands of the Atlantic slope of Guatemala; and third, because the British West Indian is a natural-born cultivator of the banana. Also, one may add, of sugar and cocoa and coco-nuts. Negroes are not, as a popular tradition states, immune from tropical fevers, and, although the once-dreaded "yellow jack" is seen no more upon Caribbean coasts, malaria prevails, a constant and ineradicable scourge; from Mexico to Panama, three-fourths of the coastal sickness is due to this cause, and the Virginia hospital is kept busy.

You may take the little branch-line train to the ruins; but unless the steam-bath of the low tropics proves overwhelming, walk for the mile that intervenes between the main railway and the Motagua River. For the great stone monuments of Quiriguá were carved and set up, like the wonderful complex of Copán, beside a sweet and sparkling stream flowing from the interior mountains.

Overhead, the immense and majestic plumes of the cohune palm, that primeval plant that seems as though evolution had passed on and forgotten it, rise in splendid curves, interlacing seventy or eighty feet above the leaf-paved pathway. These, and the great branches of the ceibas and silk-cottons, filter the blinding sun, and you walk as through the dim aisles of a green-windowed cathedral. There is little undergrowth, but fantastically shaped and fretted leaves of extraordinary size, the blossomy sprays of orchidaceous plants, hang in mid-air; between them the wind comes like the thrusts of a hot knife.

Here, beside the trail, droop the festoons of a brown, furry creeper, a double-twined rope. The yard-long blade that every Guatemalan carries, the *machete*, slashes it quickly in two places, and you may drink a long draught of clear cold water from the end of the severed strip. Or you may stop at this hut in a tiny clearing where a patch of plantains and cassava display their lighter green, and the smiling mestizo woman will make you free of her house. This is a thickly-built, single-roomed, dwelling, made of wood and cohune-leaf thatch; a single leaf of this palm will cover the roof of any little hut. But here more ambition is displayed;

the house possesses a tiny loft—for there is the ladder, a stout bamboo notched into steps, leaning against the main roof-tree. Over a charcoal fire held in an iron brazier the housewife heats coffee for you, while you sit on the edge of the fibre hammock that is the chief article of furniture; and she will give you delicious *tortillas* of cassava flour, with a thick paste of black beans as relish.

She is smilingly content with the handful of unclean paper rags, money of the country, representing a few pence, that you offer, and when you bid her "Adiós, gracias, señora," her courtesy is that of a well-bred châtelaine. A few hundred yards farther, and the huge trunks part at the edge of a square clearing; sun-dappled and silent; here, erect, majestic, imbued with extraordinary dignity, stand aloft the carved monoliths of Quiriguá.

These quadrangular pillars show, back and front, human figures elaborately dressed and adorned; the sides are worked with signs—some of which have now, after forty years of attempts at deciphering, been read as calendrical records, others still defying the modern interpreter. The material is a grey volcanic stone, brought from quarries some forty miles distant, and every line of this exquisite detail, this rich and deep carving, must have been wrought with stone tools when the Maya artists and artisans created the monuments a thousand years or so ago. The dumb eloquence of these figures, with their astonishing head-dresses, bejewelled and plumed, their complicated apparel, their serene and imperious faces, strikes the beholder with something like awe; you may wander to a near-by part of the ruins, where the great Earth-monster of stone stands, and the "calendar" stone and a number of animal heads, but you will return to gaze up at these colossal deities and think of the day when this was a great ceremonial centre of the Maya, one of a great triangle of splendid settlements in Central America. The stelæ of Quiriguá rise twenty-five feet high, and must penetrate at least ten or fifteen feet into the soil; the average weight of each cannot be less than twenty tons; the work that they represent is a measure of the importance of the site of Quiriguá, and renders mysterious the reason of its abandonment. For this wonderful priestly

centre, with its habitations and cultivated areas, was apparently voluntarily deserted by the Maya. There is no trace of the damage that hostile tribes might inflict, and the groups of Maya peasants who live in the near-by villages possess no legend of the old days when Quiriguá was a glorious and lively scene.

When the Spanish conquerors came to Central America they heard no more of this series of monuments than they heard of many others buried in the deep forest between Mexico and Honduras; Cortés, on his wonderful journey from Tehuantepec to the Rio Dulce must have passed within a few miles of Palenque and of Menché, yet no word of their strange temples reached his ears. The great religious centres were, whatever the reason for their desertion, left behind and forgotten, by the people who raised them with a precision, skill and devotion that is to-day the wonder of all who see such ruins as are big enough to have survived the hand of the looter. For so little respect has the "Indian" of to-day for the tremendous Maya ruins that he will use any carved stone for a hearth.

Quiriguá stands about seventy miles from the Caribbean Sea, at an elevation of 600 feet; sixty miles almost due south, on the borders of Guatemala with the Republic of Honduras, a mule-back journey will take you to the amazing complex of Copán. This series of Maya remains stands on the very brink of a bright stream, and covers fourteen square miles—the whole extent of a sheltered valley; the range of its sculptured dates runs from 55 B.C. until about 260 A.D., and you may still see the great stairways, the generously-planned temples and courts, and abundant signs of the wealth of artistic and scientific effort that was expended upon this great centre in its day of pride.

Copán marks the extreme south of the area of the great Central American sites of the Maya; but the honour of greatest age falls to Uaxactún, 300 miles to the north in the Guatemalan region of Petén, where the "unbaptized" Lacandon Indians are still the terror of travellers. Uaxactún displays dates which are expressed in our system of reckoning as about 215 years B.C.

This site forms the apex of the ancient Maya area, with Palenque, over 200 miles to the west, upon the third angle, within the limits of the Mexican State of Chiapas, and yielding some of the most beautiful of all the sculptures of Maya art. Few people have seen Palenque: but we can all see, in the British Museum, the fine casts brought back from a number of these Maya sites by Dr. A. P. Maudslay, to whose devoted care the world that loves ancient art and ancient mysteries owes a debt of gratitude.

Between these points of the great triangle there lie a score of wonderful ruins—Tikal, Menché, Seibal, Naranjo, Ocosingo, Flores, Ixkun, Piedras Negras, among them; and as you stand beneath the towering trees of the forest beside the Motagua River you wonder that so mighty and exacting a civilization can have passed as this passed, as if a gigantic hand had wiped figures from a heroic slate. Dig idly in the ground beside the quarries that fed Quiriguá, and you will find the stone tools of the dead Maya; but you will find no descendant of the race who claims these carvings as the work of his ancestors.

There is no record that during the three hundred years of Spanish control any official visited or heard of Quiriguá; the first stories of the ruins came from the pen of that genial American traveller and gallant, John Lloyd Stephens, who traversed Central America in 1840, ostensibly searching for the Government, but actually, in the course of his pursuit of that migratory body, enjoying a series of adventures, climbing mountains and visiting ruins. He went to Copán, but not Quiriguá; this discovery was left to the English artist Catherwood who, fortunately for archæology, accompanied the roving diplomat.

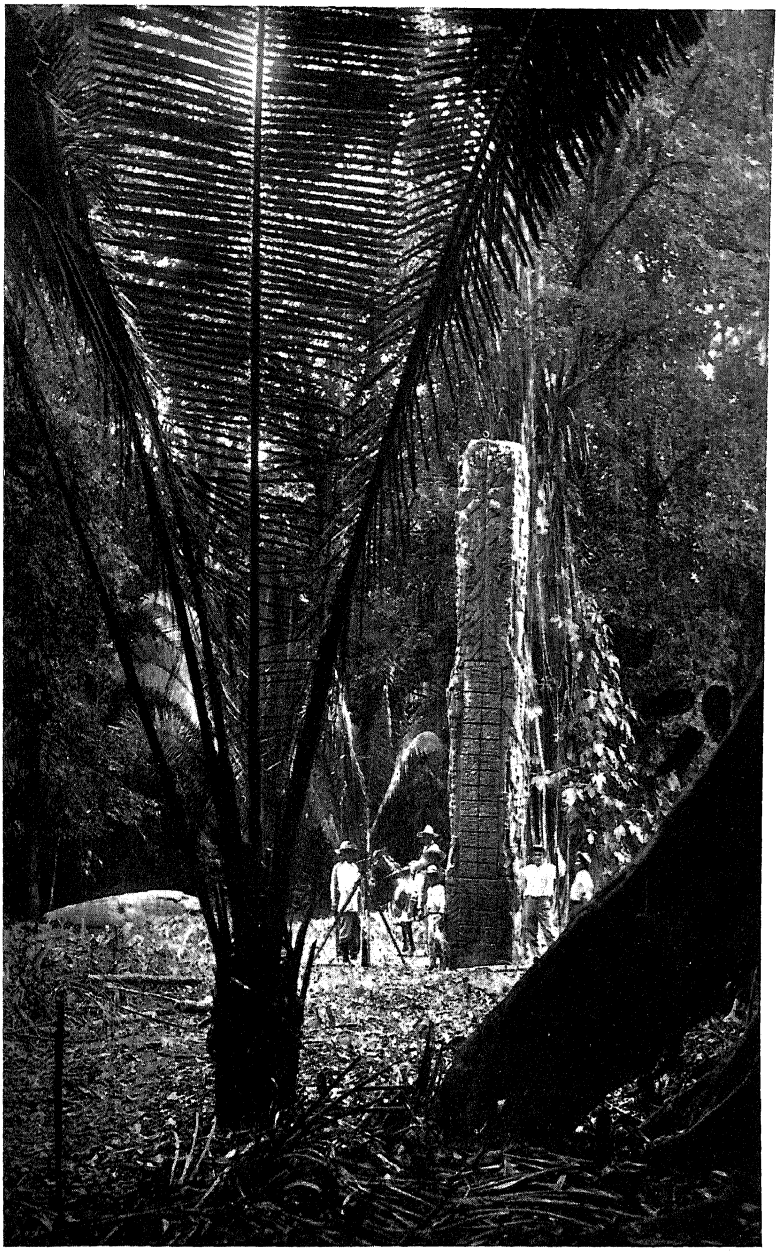
Catherwood made some drawings, finding many of the carved stones "so covered with herbage that it was difficult to ascertain their exact form" and took notes which were published both in Guatemala and Europe—the first time that any word of these marvels had reached the outside world. Stephens, when he heard what Catherwood had to say, did his best to buy the ruins, thinking that "the city might be transported bodily, and set up in New York."

But, luckily, the Guatemalan owner of the 50,000 acres of forest beside the Motagua River that included the ruins began to set a high value on his property when he found it admired, and the sale did not take place. Quiriguá was forgotten again until, in 1881, Maudslay went by chance to Guatemala and commenced the series of painstaking studies that are opening the Maya book. Maudslay says that on his first visit the undergrowth

" was so dense that we had some trouble in finding any of the monuments, and, even when in touch with them, so thickly were they covered with creepers, moss and ferns that it was not easy to distinguish them from dead tree-trunks."

Now that a banana-growing company has bought the riverine lands and ruins with them, a few interested folk visit them during the dry months; but the forest encroaches after every rainy season, and the ancient terraces with their broken steps have been ransacked for treasures. Time takes something away year by year.

If your visit to the ruins is brief, you may hurry back to the railway and catch the down train back to Puerto Barrios. Also, you have the choice of seeking the shelter of the banana company's roof, or of walking through the woods to the insouciant native village of Los Amates, there to spend the night and catch the up-train to Guatemala City next day. I have always preferred the last. Los Amates is nothing but a group of palm-thatched cottages, sun-drenched, beside the sparkling river; thick shade trees, Indian laurels or " amates," as they are called here (a variety of Ficus), spread violet shadows upon the sand, howling monkeys call mournfully from the tree-tops across the 200-foot wide stream, and flocks of screaming parrots, bright green, fly home as the sun sinks. Your fare is simple; chicken stewed with red peppers and rice; black beans, first boiled and then, when the skins have been rubbed off on a stone *metate*, fried in a thick paste; oranges, maize tortillas, and black coffee. For my part, I think there is no better fare on earth, eaten as this, in sight of the Guatemalan forest, with the river a sheet of mauve



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COHUNE PALM IN FOREGROUND

and pale green under the changing sky, a smiling barefoot girl as waitress. A canvas cot under a mosquito net for a bed, in a little bare room built of wide mahogany boards, offers sweet sleep—if you can outwit the mosquitoes.

Scorching heat floods the golden street, the forest and the little houses, when you leave Los Amates to take the up-train next day; but the wise traveller will keep at hand a wrap or a rug, for the railway track continues to rise henceforth until it reaches the capital at an elevation of 5,000 feet above sea-level. There a blazing sun beats upon the streets for five or six hours every day, but the nights after sundown (the sun descends, bringing velvet night after him, like the closing of a shutter, at six o'clock each evening) and the early mornings are piercingly cold.

Never do I shiver in the stone-built, unheated rooms of one of the highland-tropic towns of Latin America without admiring once more the hardiness of the Spanish race; nor without admitting an incipient wish that comfortable chairs and couches, and the cheer of pleasant fires, had not been scorned by that hardihood.

Tropic forest will presently be left behind, as the land rises; Zacapa, where we stop for a hasty lunch in the station, displays a wide and sunny plain, with fantastic purple mountains in the distance. You will hear a thousand plans for "development work" in Central America. The hotel lobbies are haunted with people who are waiting for, or have secured and are anxious to sell, some unparalleled concession: and among them is the scheme for irrigating and growing sugar upon the wide plain near Zacapa.

From this station, a very old point upon the road to Guatemala City long before the railway came to supersede the mule-train, a branch line is under construction across the border into the neighbour republic of Salvador, eventually to join with the Salvadoreño capital. As usually happens with neighbours, Guatemala and El Salvador have had various sparring matches during the hundred years of independence, but since the famous "Totoposte War" there have been new attempts to cement the intermittent friendship, and it has been possible to contemplate with equanimity the results of quick

communication. The railway plan is, in fact, part of a revived, a serious, scheme for the economic linking of the five Central American states. Whether it can be supplemented by political consolidation or, at least, definite co-operation, is a more delicate question; but all lovers of this *querido rinconcito de la tierra* renew their hopes when another mile is added to the railway network. Who would have believed that Mexico and Guatemala, long presenting prickly fronts to each other across the international frontiers, would bridge that line with a railway? But to-day trains run over the Suchiate, carrying more than political refugees, the chief former exchange.

El Rancho's little platform is crowded with women selling oranges—the sweetest and juiciest oranges in all the world. Travellers lay in a stock of this unsurpassed fruit. Every way-side station has its sellers—almost invariably girls and women, and as the alien negroid element is left behind in the hot country the true indigenous folk appear, with their smooth, frequently handsome faces, wide-cheekboned, and black-eyed; the girls wear their two braids of coarse blue-black hair hanging down their backs, the married women fold them about their round heads, but in most cases the plaits are interwoven with red or purple ribbon. Where the native races come into close contact with the old or new European element, they are gradually giving up their traditional clothes, and one may see pure-type "Indians" as well as, of course, all the mixed-blood people, the *mestizos*, wearing factory-made blouses and long bedraggled skirts. As one penetrates into the untouched heart of Guatemala, into the regions where no railway ever has been or ever will be built, where scarcely a decent mule-track leads from village to village, the pretty, sedulously-wrought clothing of the old tribes is still to be seen in all its particularity. The blue cloth folded about the waist displays the special patterns of the clan; the red belt holding the skirt in place, and the *guipil*, the very shape of a Magyar blouse, tucked into the skirt, properly the *pik*, but now called by the Spanish word "enagua," are hand-woven upon the loom that hangs behind every family hut in the uplands; they are beautifully embroidered with

intricate geometrical patterns, with flowers and birds and beasts. A Guatemalan girl, young and slender, trotting down the mountain-side, her bare bronzed arms swinging in rhythm, clad in her short skirt and gay guipil, carrying a basket on her head covered with a richly embroidered cloth, presents one of the most charming pictures of native life to be seen in the three Americas. For purity of type, for distinction and bright adornment, one would have to go to Java to find the equal of the Maya-Quiché girl.

This truth does not exclude another—that most of the older women are incredibly poor, dirty and gnarled; or that the men and boys, bent below the weight of the enormous burdens upon their strong backs, peer up from the heavy carrying-strap with the eyes of folk who have had submission ground into them for 400 years. The oxen look up with eyes like these.

As the day fades the train climbs, panting and groaning, into the maze of purple mountains, elfish, fantastic mountains of sudden pinnacles and horrifying gorges and bewitching tender valleys. For the last sixty miles or so there is not one mile of straight track. Now and again the train shudders round a precarious corner where, in wet seasons, the bed is like to give way, to tumble the rails over a fearsome brink, and leave a gap. It's the kind of practical joke one would expect of Guatemalan volcanic gods.

All the lush, thick turmoil of the green tropic jungle of the lowlands has long disappeared. Here are severe stretches with nothing visible above the sparse mantle of coarse grass but ranks on ranks of the oddest prehistoric sort of attempts at trees—enormous candelabra cactus, acres and acres, miles and miles, of these strange dull-green spiny arms, held aloft. The effect is something like that of a certain high diamondiferous plain in the interior of Brazil, where the chief vegetation is a gigantic lily crowned above a mass of spiky leaves with a large violet flower. That queer gnomish strip was only broken by a wood of little magnolia trees covered with big cup-shaped creamy blossoms; here in Guatemala the array of marching cactus is checked by thickets of mimosas, covered with fluffy pale balls. Where there is water there are fields,

hedged by the straight dark swords of the " Spanish dagger " with its spire of white bells, and the prickly pear, with a rim of red fruit upon each fleshy, paddle-shaped leaf. Many of these are of the wild spineless variety, quite good food for live stock. Willows and sallows spring beside each stream.

Night shuts down. The train still works its way, twisting, protesting, upwards. It is a long day's journey, this rise from steamy tropic forest to cool mountainous interior, and if there is the least occasion for delay Guatemala will not be reached until ten o'clock or so. Nowadays, this is just as well, for the lapis-lazuli sky of Guatemala's night, full of brilliant stars that seem to shine down long lanes of soft darkness, hides the rawness of the new city still engaged in rising from the havoc of the earthquakes of the end of 1917 and beginning of 1918 that ended by wrecking practically every building.

Reinforced cement houses, clean and new, have risen upon the old foundations ; there are brand-new hotels with, think of it ! excellent plumbing, really up-to-date " barber-shops," and cosmopolitan cuisine ; new railway stations, new churches, new everythings, are creating the capital afresh. The poorer dwellings down the side-streets, away from modernized 6a Avenida Sur and its cross streets, the " Calles," still show plastered fronts, washed with pink and blue, roofed with red tiles ; but gone are the thick-walled cloisters with their stucco saints, the fine cathedral with its splendid carved choir-stalls, its furniture inlaid with mother-of-pearl, its golden ornaments, its ten-foot-high silver candlesticks. Most of these treasures have been sold for immediate needs. Even the lovely old ruins of the Cerro del Carmen have either fallen or suffered irreparable damage.

Before the earthquake, one could wander through the Guatemala streets, paved with diamond-shaped blocks of stone faintly tinged with pearly colours, and find a delight in every hundred yards. Deep doors and windows, jealously guarded as the Moorish dwellings whose fashion went across the Mediterranean to Spain and from Spain to the New World, hide dim interiors, but here and there are bright glimpses of a sunlit patio garden, a handsome dark face behind a wrought-iron

grille; a trio of Indian women padding along the shady side of a bright street, their gay clothes relating them to the long trail of magenta bougainvillea thrown over a white wall; a file of barefoot soldiers, a couple of opinionated mules laden with red pottery; the lilt of a guitar from the interior of a dark posada, with the arms of a Spanish hidalgo graved in stone over the portal.

Guatemala City will always have charm. It has a delightful situation, in an enclosed valley 5,000 feet high, with a climate that is bright and cool all the year round; the woods and hills and ravines near by are of a sweet luxuriance; and then there are the ravishing contours and colours of the watching volcanoes. These beautiful heads change hue at sunrise and midday and sundown, marching with the dawn upon the city until you feel sure that, by crossing this emerald meadow, you could touch the blue skirts of Agua and Fuego: then receding to a delicate shadow, and rising in a cloak of purple and red at close of day.

But when you look upon their majesty, remember that this is the third City of Guatemala that they have destroyed: first, La Vieja, ruined since a night in 1541 when the beautiful Doña Beatriz was drowned with her Spanish ladies; then, in 1776, La Antigua, and in 1918, this "new" capital. The site was chosen in 1776 on account of its position, nearly surrounded as it is by deep barrancas (ravines), supposed to break the force of earth tremors. For a hundred years and more the theory seemed justified, although every year, and especially after rains, there have been greater or lesser *temblores*. Then, about Christmas of 1917 began a nerve-racking series of shakes and shocks, enduring for four or five weeks, and ending, in January of 1918, with the wreck of the city. Water mains, lighting wires and plant, as well as houses, were smashed.

I think the city has lost none of its population. As in all earthquake zones, people cling to a land of incomparable beauty and fertility, and, while every one dreads and fears the earthquakes, little homes and big mansions are rebuilt, the corner shops stand erect again and the dark-eyed Señora, bronze-cheeked, gentle-voiced, offers ice and charcoal, maize

and black beans, water-pots and bacallao, just as she did before the earthquake.

There is one day's journey to be made from Puerto Barrios that no traveller should miss, to Livingston and up the Rio Dulce to Lake Izabal. From this point one may proceed, via the Polochic river, to Coban and the lovely coffee regions of Chajul, riding thence to Santa Cruz del Quiché (old Ututlán), thence to Sololá, Lake Atitlán, Tecpan Guatemala, and from there to Antigua and the capital.

From Barrios one can get a motor launch for Livingston, a little cobble-streeted, red-roofed town climbing up and perched upon a little bluff where the river Dulce pours into the Caribbean. The Rio Dulce is the narrow channel between cliffs sought by the waters of the Golfo Dulce or Lake Izabal on their way to the sea; the boat winds through the outlet, each turn displaying some new beauty, with the famous palisades as the crowning charm, until suddenly the river widens to the blue sheet of the lake, its sloping sides hung with all the bright flowers of the Central American tropics. To the north lies the mysterious region of Petén, with British Honduras shutting the Peteneros from the sea; west of the lake is the mouth of the Polochic, leading to the little railway that runs from Pancajche, and south of the lake is the port of Izabal, where, before the railroad came to Barrios, passengers used to disembark, to cross the mountains for the valley of the Motagua, always the main high road to Guatemala City.

CHAPTER III

GUATEMALA CITY, YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY

Guatemala City—Old Convents—The Public Market—Fruit and Embroideries—The Rose of Hell—The Museum—Zapote Baths—President Estrada Cabrera—The Press—The Patio House—Rainy Season—Domestics—The Poyo—The Goma.

LIKE all Spanish-American towns, Santiago de Guatemala " la Nueva " is built on a rectangular plan, with the main plaza as the centre of civic life, where the official buildings, the Cathedral, and the palacio of the Captain-General, were erected in 1776. In the old City, La Antigua, no less than thirty-seven Captains-General had ruled, proudly enough, although officially subject to the Viceroy of Mexico, but in this new Guatemala only fifty years passed before all Central America threw off allegiance to Spain, in 1821.

Here at the side of the great plaza, with its gardens canopied with glowing bougainvillea and the honied orange wisps of the grevillea, were, before the earthquake, the famous old " portales," arches running the whole length of the square's side, where shops filled with French silks and Spanish groceries stood under the shade, and itinerant vendors set up tiny booths. On special occasions, as Christmas, Indians came in from all the country-side, with delightful dolls, showing intimate family groups, carved calabashes, embroideries, deadly-appearing sweets, beautifully made baskets and miniature hammocks and baskets.

The great sight of Guatemala, in addition to the sinister Cuartel, more prison than barracks, and the President's palacio (where soldiers turned pedestrians from the pavement), was the expensive Teatro Colon, used for official balls, and, rarely,

for theatrical performances when a subsidized company was brought from Latin Europe. But neither this nor the Templo de Minerva, used once a year for official speeches and ceremonies by the inventor, President Estrada Cabrera, as a revival of old worship of true wisdom and grace, had any attraction if your taste ran to such "conventos" as that of San Francisco, with its pink fortress-like walls and its jutting blue bastions from which a plaster saint looked down. All cloisters in Central America, by the way, are "conventos," whether they once housed monks or nuns.

Not all the old convents of colonial days weathered the storms of liberalism. One velvet, starlit night I walked an unknown street of Guatemala, where houses slept behind their shutters and there was no sound but the clacking of a mule's hoofs upon the stone street. A dim light showed from an enormous saguan door, I saw that it was ajar, and stepped inside, finding myself in a great patio, a tinkling fountain in the middle, and the starlit sky glinting above a second, high gallery of dim arches, built over the ground-floor square. All the space of the courtyard was filled with recumbent mules, while the arched corridors surrounding it sheltered innumerable sleepers, their heads upon harness or against the great loaded baskets. Here and there a tiny charcoal brazier glowed, and the aroma of coffee and stewing beans drifted through the darkness. The old house of the religious had been turned into a cheap posada, where Indian cargadores could bring their beasts and burdens for the night; it was a sudden sight of all the teeming, working, almost underground basic life of Guatemala, that goes on while presidents rise and fall, while groups of white or wealthy folk wrangle and fight, while far-away international markets ruin or enrich the planter. Here, year in and year out, is the Indian, planting, sowing, making pottery and cloth, incessantly climbing up and down his mountains with his wares on his perennial jog-trot.

For amusements in Guatemala you might take the mule tram-car that started from one corner of the great plaza and ran through entrancing suburban lanes to the lovely hill of the Carmen; or to the Zoo, where a few animals, not too well kept, drowsed in the sun; or you might ride out to such

enchanting outskirts of the city as Guarda Viejo; or along the beautiful Reforma road; or the Hipodromo avenue, with the barranca at the end with its bright gardens. Busts and statues were there, of fairly recent political heroes; but the next political hero was likely to prefer the sight of his own portrait, and changes occurred—as in Brazil, where every new party alters all the street names, to the confusion of the public, so that some streets bear three labels and yet always go by the ancient name that no longer appears officially.

Charming houses, with agreeable hosts in them, bordered the Hipodromo and the Reforma road; Guatemalteca families are courtly, of sweet manners and the kindliest wit; while the foreign groups have the ready cheer that so many people show outside their own countries rather than inside. These houses are frequently furnished and decorated with a breath-taking luxury—when money comes easily for coffee and sugar, there is little to spend it on but house-splendour, jewels, and trips to Paris. Wherefore interior paintings, carpets and curtains, are regal.

But for a revelation of the ancient perennial life of Guatemala, go to the daily moving-picture of the public market. When I am in Guatemala I haunt it, morning by morning. Twin quadrangles enclose this market, with space assigned to varied merchandise. In this section, for example, are roots, seeds, herbs—wild ginger, red peppers of the Pacific slope, vanilla, indigo; many aromatic and sweet-smelling things with none but Maya-Quiché names. Here, little packets of red achiote (annotto), for colouring stews; then, great sacks of squashy turtle-eggs; of tiny dried fish; roots of the sweet potato, yellow, pinkish or violet-stained; and of the enormous swollen *yuca* (the mandioca of Brazil) from which all Caribbean countries make cassava. Over in this corner are coconuts from the coast, and you can buy the oil of this nut and of its distant cousin, the corozo; and casareep, the juice expressed from the yuca root when shredded. This is a poisonous liquid before boiling, but afterwards is of such a fine flavouring quality that it forms the base of the very best table-sauces. Then there are palmitos, the top buds of a certain class of palm-trees, not bad as a vegetable, but unattractive as the staff of life. Yet

upon this Cortés' expedition sustained itself for days during his journey from Mexico to Honduras. Piles of ground-nuts; of the tiny little tomatoes no bigger than cherries that are known as *mil-tomates*; pale yellow guavas; aguacates, excellent when cut up in its own shell with oil and a squeeze of juice from a fresh lime; Guatemala grows eighteen different kinds of these "alligator pears." Sacks and sacks of the fine black kidney beans of the Caribbean; okra; tons of maize of a score of different kinds and colours; papayas in quantities; tunas (prickly pears); packets of tobacco leaves. And then the range of foreign things long naturalized in Central America—all the citrus fruits, thousands of scented limes, and very sweet oranges; indifferent apricots and peaches, good figs, pomegranates, masses of beetroot and onions, aubergines, garbanza beans, fresh olives, pale strawberries, and, in their season, respectable mangoes, not to be compared with the cultivated, pink-cheeked beauties of the West Indian islands. Guatemala is never short of food, you say to yourself; and even though the national peso, the paper peso, is worth no more than a penny, yet one *real*, any one of the eight *reales* in the peso, will still buy a handful of something in the market.

Behind a big stall piled and surrounded with fruit sits a haughty woman from Palín, famous for centuries for its juicy pine-apples that melt in the mouth. The pine-apple is almost the only native fruit of the American tropics that *is* juicy, by the way; the bananas, if they are true natives, a doubtful point, are soapy, starchy, fodder, to which the word fruit does not belong; in the same stodgy class is the red-fleshed sapodilla, and not much better are the chirimoyas. In a higher class, when they are good, are the round, or sometimes oval, brown, thin-skinned fruit that the Spaniards called *nísperos*, just as they carelessly applied "ciruela" to the *jocote*, a long scarlet fruit, extremely acid, that grows on the bare branch of small, gnarled trees in Central America. These two are neither "medlars" nor "plums," but they are useful enough. The nispero has sweet, very luscious, pale brown flesh, with small black seeds—beware the scrap of white embedded beside this seed, for it is nothing more nor less than chewing-gum; the

nispero (Mexico calls it chico zapote) is the fruit of the little graceful tree yielding chicle. The jocote is good enough for cooking, and so is this other brilliant thing, glowing in scarlet and orange heaps, with its green, curved seed attached outside to the smaller end of the fruit. The roasted cashew nut is delicious, as all good West Indians know; but the smell of the uncooked fruit, in a closed room, is an intolerable mixture of terebine and long-deceased fish.

The sapodilla is insipid and mealy; but not so this other rough-skinned, brownish irregular ball, the mamey. A good, ripe specimen, with its apricot-coloured firm flesh, as hard almost as an apple and with a delicious flavour, is of the first rank in tropic fruit, and it is surprising that cultivators have not taken more trouble to reduce its formidable stone, and transport the mamey to Europe. Fine grenadillas, passion-fruit, are here, with their casing like an orange-hued egg-shell and the interior mass of seeds embedded in cool, delicious pulp.

But now—this is the invincibly attractive part of the market—come over to the stalls where stout, swarthy women will sell, when persuaded to unearth the best work, embroidered guipiles of the interior. Fine cotton cloth, some of it woven with a flat thread, is the background for ancient, bold, beautiful designs. Eschew the too-bright, with a lot of coloured silk—the silks are foreign-made, the colour dubious. I have three specially prized guipiles: one was cajoled from the back of a sprightly old dame at Palín railway station; it has intricate patterns of animals with geometrical motifs, worked in the red of cochineal, with the purple of the sea-shell for which Tyre became famous; the other is an incredibly soft cloth, almost crêpe, from San Martín, with splendid colours; the third is a heavy pattern whose embroidering thread is dyed with nothing but indigo. Then there are belts, red, broad belts, finely worked; skirt-lengths, *'naguas*, worked with the signs of the tribes; head-bands, fine and stiff, with their silk tassels.

Fine hammocks of pita fibre, thirty feet long; many patterns of the *morral*, the fibre nose-bag that is nowadays used for all kinds of carrying; carved and painted gourds and

calabashes, shallow for beans or stew, deep and narrow for the *tiste*, a pleasant drink made with ground chocolate, sugar, and parched and powdered maize, flavoured with cinnamon or other spice. Babies' beds of palm-leaf sheaths; matting of many kinds; sandals; scores and scores of admirably-plaited baskets of innumerable shapes and colours and sizes. And then the clay ware: big tinajas to hold cool water; pretty little vessels shining with the silver-lead glaze of Quezaltenango; fine jars from Mixco. All good, primitive shapes.

And, if you could get tired of the market, there are, for interested eyes, the market women. Men carry the loads, but women do the selling, with an aplomb and capacity certainly as marked in the pure Indian as in the mestiza. In Guatemala you can buy real wooden roses. I saw them first in a pink and blue house in the City, where the owner had brought them down from the slopes of Fuego to sell to tourists. In a cool, thick-walled room were stacks of wooden roses, big and little, half-closed, wide open, flaring, drooping, of exquisite frilling and fluted petalling. Don Fulano had made a careful expedition, taking three pack-mules, to the very top of the volcano, the best growing, he said, at the crater's edge. He was convinced, as the distinguished French naturalist M. Morelet was likewise, that these queer things were caused by emanations from the crater of Fuego; but later I obtained a pamphlet published in Guatemala in Spanish which states that the "Rosa del Infierno," the Rose of Hell, is an excrescence found on the branch of almost any shrub of the Fuego region, caused by the seeds of a parasite of the Loranthus family. This plant parasite is without roots, the seed, dropped by birds, attaches itself to the host, a swelling is produced and eventually breaks open to form the Rose of Hell, the flower being "an extension of the fibres of the host"; it is a disease, just as the gall-nut, or the red silky ball found on rose-trees, is a sign of trouble. Don Fulano said that he was sure, from observations made on the mountain, that the Rose takes three or four years to develop; and he was equally sure that it occurred nowhere else in all the world. Of this I am not so sure; there are reports of a similar "rose" found on one of the West Indian islands. With their ferny ripples and veinings,

much like the patterns that Jack Frost draws upon a window in winter, these flowers seem fit decorations for the jagged crests of volcanoes.

The National Museum of Guatemala was, before the earthquake, quite handsome, viewed from the exterior; and that was about all one could say of it. Outside, lying face upwards, exposed to wind and weather, were some fine carved monoliths from Santa Lucia Cozumalhuapa, while inside on the shelves were chiefly such objects as were too large and ponderous to be carried away. Most of the authentic material was from the Tecpan Guatemala region, Quiché work of merit inferior to that of the great Maya area, poorly represented. There were few or no specimens of fine pottery, jade, or gold work, any such collections being found in the houses of individuals. From westerly Guatemala the National collection includes a few stone carvings, showing the Zapotec influence that had so peculiar an effect upon old Maya art. Excellent examples of this mixed culture are seen at the sites of El Baúl and Pantaleón, not far from Patulul, on the Pacific slope. Great stone heads, portraits in stone carved almost in the round, and huge pictorial tablets, have been unearthed at these sites.

In the Museum are, or were, few correct and detailed labels; and it goes without saying that none of the few remaining Maya manuscripts has a place in Guatemala. This last lack is not the fault of the republic; very few of these precious manuscripts are known to exist. Two, so-called, are actually the halves of one document: these, the Codex Troano and the Codex Cortesianus, are in different collections in Spain. Another is in Dresden, the third in Paris; whispers of a fourth were recently heard from Vienna. At the period when Europe received these manuscripts, the Church authorities regarded them as the work of the Devil; to-day, I suppose, no one goes digging upon Maya sites of América Centrál without cherishing a faint spark of hope that he may be the discoverer of one of these priceless relics, a miraculously preserved script. But Guatemala has not, as yet, so much as facsimiles of these records. When a new Museum is in order (an attempt to use a Temple of Minerva after the 1918 earthquakes was not

satisfactory) probably more attention will be given to archæology.

I can imagine no archæological task more fascinating than that of Directorship of a Maya museum, with sites all about awaiting exploration. Guatemala has later history, of the Spanish Colonial period, for example, which had little or no remembrance in the Guatemala Museum: there is nothing that is akin, in all Central America, to the colonial collections so excellently preserved and beautifully displayed in private hands in Quito and Lima.

In each of those cities are to be seen furniture, beaten silver tableware, and entire series of clothes of the Colonial epoch, from pearl-embroidered gloves to silk dresses, armour and leather jerkins: but there are several reasons why such collections are scant in Central America. One factor is the artificially stimulated rancour against Spain which, now diminished, induced disregard for Spanish culture and developed in a mild degree the same sort of "Indianism" that down south in Brazil led distinguished gentlemen to abjure their Portuguese names and to assume Guaraní titles. This disregard was roused to violence in Mexico when in 1823 the Congress proposed that the bones of Cortés should be dug up and burnt; and is shown passively in the total lack of memorials to any of the great Spanish conquistadores, city fathers or governors, whose influence was paramount for 300 years. The sword of Pedro de Alvarado was, it is true, guarded until recent years in Guatemala; but it was lent to an exhibition in the United States, and there disappeared. The case, on return, was found to be as empty as Alvarado's tomb in Antigua.

But there are other reasons than disregard of Spanish inheritance for the lack of good museums in all Central American countries with the exception of Costa Rica. One is poverty, attendant upon political troubles and a frequent migration of the most eminent families; and then there are the earthquakes. A great deal of valuable material of great archæological interest, some in private hands in Guatemala, was lost in the destruction of early 1918. Guatemala's finest museums are still the great temples of the deep forestal belts.

ANCIENT MAYA STONE CARVING, EL BAUL, GUATEMALA

Bathing at the adorable Zapote baths, and discussing palace scandals were, formerly, among Guatemalan amusements.

The Zapote baths are natural springs in a lovely ravine. It is one of the merits of the Guatemalteco that he loves his own country, while one of his great gifts is that of eloquence. It did not therefore surprise me when, descending quite early one morning to this ravine, I saw a barefoot peon, standing upon a rock and pouring out an address of such moving quality that he himself was shaken by it. Tears, real tears, poured down his face; he clasped his broken straw sombrero to his heart and apostrophized the beautiful scene; he was simply admiring Guatemala, and, while he may have been spurred by a *copita* or two, he was perfectly sincere. At the very bottom of the barranca are the baths of satiny water. Every bather has a grotto to himself, of grey-green rock decorated with tiny wild ferns; and while you bathe, scores of little grey-green fish come timorously to touch you, darting away like lightning flashes when you move.

As to the underground rumours and stories. Those days are over, days of mediaeval intrigue, terrible whisperings, dark schemings; they disappeared when the revolution of 1920 was ended by the resignation, in April, of President Manuel Estrada Cabrera, after an innings of twenty-two years. Since then the reins of office have been held more gently.

But in the day of President Estrada C., people whispered in corners of what "*he*" had done, contemplated, or might do. His name was never spoken aloud, and every one warned new-comers that every one else was a "spy." The hotels were full of amusing but rather shabby adventurers of both sexes, chiefly from God's Own Country, looking for the sort of easy money that such an atmosphere suggests, and every second person had a gold mine to sell or was hunting a concession—to bring hardwoods from Petén, treasure from a secret place near Coban, to develop opal mines or a railway, to grow thornless cactus, to raise ostriches, to start a silk factory. For any concession, with the monopoly secured, could be taken to London or Paris and sold. It does really seem as if a concession to do anything in the world is saleable in hard-headed Throgmorton Street, so long as the scheme is sufficiently un-

sound and the location of the enterprise cannot be found upon a map.

Of the evil deeds of Estrada C. one heard incessantly, and of the frequently quite well-planned attempts to assassinate him, and of his hairbreadth escapes. For despite plots, earthquakes, and the city revolution when battles were fought across what was left of Guatemala after the earthquake, the ex-dictator dwelt quietly, until his death in late 1924 on an estate in the environs of the capital. Like Rafael Carrera, this president had much Indian blood in his veins, and, also, came from Los Altos. A Vice-President under Reina Barrios, he obtained the office of Chief Magistrate after Barrios' assassination quite simply, by walking in upon a cabinet meeting, laying a revolver upon the table, and remarking: "Gentlemen, I am the President of Guatemala." This was in February, 1898.

At intervals afterwards elections were held. I saw this national event twice, and the procedure scarcely varied. First, President Estrada Cabrera announced publicly that he would like to retire from the burden of office, and hoped that some other candidate would come forward. This was taken as an intimation that he would then know whom to put into prison, and no applicants appeared. Then a week of elections was held, and upon every country road in Guatemala one met processions of smiling Indians, dressed in their best for the fiesta, marched along by military escorts to village after village, at each of which they were feasted, slept, played their drums and marimbas, cast their vote. They marched on to repeat the process somewhere else. Upon the various estates where large numbers of Indians were employed, the system of voting was simple; the citizens were ranged in lines, with the alcalde of the village or major-domo of the estate, as the case might be, in charge, and when the polling officer appeared they were asked the name of the person for whom they voted. Properly drilled, they replied in chorus: "El Licenciado Manuel Estrada Cabrera"; except in one case known to me where the foreign *finquero* (owner of a *finca*, estate) could *not* get out of his men's heads the *idée fixe* that they were to vote for the dead Manuel Lisandro Barrillas. As rumour associated the assassination of the unhappy Bar-

rillas with the chief magistrate's system of eliminating rivals (for, once a president, Barrillas had dared to think again of office after Estrada Cabrera's accession to power), the situation was a trifle embarrassing. After the election was over, a gold-printed circular was showered upon the city, in which the President regretted that the burden of office was again placed upon his shoulders, but promised to do his duty.

Once upon a time, a bomb was placed in such connexion with "his" house telephone that it would kill the first man who picked up the receiver; but that man by a strange accident happened not to be the President. On another occasion an attack was made by his own pet students of the Military Academy, as he entered the door to walk through their lined-up ranks on a day of fiesta. A rifle was levelled at the president, his personal attendant (the German who invariably watched over him just as the hawk-faced Mexican used to watch over Zelaya of Nicaragua) had the presence of mind to reach forward and pull a flag in front of the president's face, and the shots went astray, although one bullet wounded Estrada C., in his flung-up hand. No Guatemalan surgeon was trusted to dress that wound, but a Scotch doctor long resident in the country, from early yellow-fever days, was called to the palace. A bitter revenge was taken upon the military cadet corps and upon their families, and the academy was closed. On another occasion, two young Guatemalan doctors returned from a foreign course joined the "antis," and made an elaborate plan. They rented a house near that of the president, laid wires to the middle of the road and planted a bomb; the president's coachman was then bribed to bring his horses to a standstill with the carriage just over the bomb, and the plotters waited at the window for the next presidential airing. All went according to plan, except that the coachman pulled up a few feet too soon, and was the only person killed by the explosion; the president's secretary, by his side, was hurt by a splinter, and Estrada C. rose, gave his arm to the wounded man, and calmly walked the hundred yards to his palacio.

Then came the hunt for the layers of the bomb. The wires were quickly traced to the house, the names of the occupiers found; but they had fled, and were actually hidden for many

days by an old woman relative, in an empty cottage to which she took food every night. But her servants spoke of her nightly pilgrimage, suspicion was roused, the house surrounded one night; a battle between the street and the house-top began at dawn, and ended when the two young men turned their last shots upon themselves.

Searching for implicated persons, arrests were made of almost every one possessing electric engineering equipment (electric appliances were from this time stripped from every motor-car entering the country) and amongst them of a foreign electrician, who later told me the story of his experience with Estrada C. He had been out of the country, quite safe, for years, but he still whispered and glanced about that Costa Rican balcony as if spies were lurking behind the vines. As he told his tale, he had been put in a cell, "incomunicado," and no reply to his anxious questionings was made, for three days; then at midnight of the third day he was roused from sleep, taken hurriedly through corridors and doors by soldiers, and injected into a big room, with candles burning at a table at the far end. Behind this table sat the president. He was told to approach nearer, and minutely examined. Proofs of his guilt were in the president's hands, he was told, and he was to be shot at dawn; and his wife was in prison, too, and would probably also be punished. He had better own up, name all his fellow would-be assassins, if he wanted to save her. As a matter of fact, the engineer was quite innocent, and probably Estrada C. knew this, but hoped that in his anxiety he might make a useful suggestion. But the victim could not name any accomplices of the two Guatemaltecos and could say nothing but that he knew nothing. Very well, then he knew what would happen.

In his anxiety, the engineer cast his eyes round the room; upon the wall hung a portrait of Roosevelt, presented as a token of American friendship by that ruler to Estrada. Following his glance, the president also glanced at the picture, leaned forward and said:

"Yes! You may look at that portrait. But your president cannot save you. You may look to heaven; and God cannot save you. There is only one who can save you—I!"

He was bundled from the room, put on a train to San José, where he found his wife, and they were ordered to leave by the steamer that day and never to return.

It was on the morning after one of these stirring events that the writer, eagerly picking up the chief local daily and searching its columns for light upon the matter, began to realize something of the limitations of the Central American newspaper editor: for there wasn't one single word about it. I doubt whether the Central American journalist has ideas differing from those of his international confrères as to what news really means, but he has to live up to a much higher standard of discretion.

"All the news that's fit to print," solemnly announces one of the New York dailies as its watchword; the Central American journal's motto is rather "All the news it's safe to print," and, upon the day after a thwarted assassination, adorns its front page with an article translated from a French magazine upon exploration in North Africa, filling odd corners with poems upon Mother Love and Disillusion. Revolts, and attacks upon the lives of the great, especially upon Presidents, are not the sort of thing that should be made prominent; the natural death, even, of a ruler of a far country, is not thrust before the public . . . perhaps it is considered indiscreet to suggest that leaders are not immortal. The subject is avoided until, some months later, one reads a casual allusion to the late revered colleague, or to his successor.

On the other hand, a diatribe against a foreign company operating in Central America is, nearly always, good journalism. Some few years ago I read in a Guatemalan newspaper a furious article directed against a railway on account of an accident that had happened on the previous day. The head-lines spoke of the cruel murder of *hijos de la Patria*, and denounced the company as an octopus sucking the life-blood of the country. A *peon* (workman) had, it appeared, feasted too well, and overcome with aguardiente, had lain down to sleep it off with his head pillowed upon the rails; and he had chosen a corner screened from view of the city-bound train until the driver was right upon the spot. As if a poor man cannot take his rest upon the track without risk of his life, cried the indig-

nant editor; it was a shame and a scandal, and something ought to be done about it.

On the other hand, it was the son-of-the-country himself who was denounced solemnly in a Panama newspaper on another occasion. The chief prison was at the foot of the old sea-wall, with the prisoners' yard forming an enclosed well upon which one could look down and pass the time o' day with acquaintances. A workman had left a long ladder in this deep enclosure, and a prisoner had walked calmly up and away. Disgraceful behaviour, cried the journal, heading its shocked paragraph: "Un Grave Escandalo."

Amour-propre guided the journalist's pen in both those instances, and it is probably pride which inserts the adjective in the paragraph informing the public that such a gentleman is about to marry a lady who is "the legitimate daughter" of somebody; and I have still in my possession a clipping from a Central American daily which seems to me wonderfully phrased. The magazine with which I was associated had printed some poems, and, by mistake, called the author a Guatemalteco. "The worthy and brilliant periodical has been deceived by this low villain," said the *diario*. "Every one knows that after stealing his father's table silver in his own country, and breaking into a nunnery, this degenerate merely came here in order to rest his diseased body upon a fragment of our sacred soil."

I have never heard of a libel case in América Centrál.

Unless you are accustomed to the system of building houses in Spain—or North Africa—the residences of Spanish America, or that part which carries on the traditions of the colonial three centuries, may strike you as oddly suited to the tropics. The airy balconies of lightly-built houses, raised on tall wooden legs to catch the breeze, of British Honduras, or of Panama, seem to fit the scenery and the climate: the patio house, and especially a one-floor patio house, appears out of the picture when you find it, for example, at sweltering Cartagena on the Caribbean coast of Colombia, or La Guaira. But, as a matter of fact, the thickly-walled rooms opening on to a central flowery court are cool enough; and when you complain of narrow streets in such a broiling city as Panama you have for-

gotten the Spanish colonial rule! Build narrow streets in hot countries in order to create shade, and wide streets in cold countries to catch all the sunshine.

But Central America has no old, permanent coast cities; both on the Atlantic and the Pacific, ports were seldom more than mere shipping stations, and almost invariably the big towns were and are placed at an elevation some distance inland; only in the case of Nicaragua was the inland city of the Spaniards built at low level, and this for the same sound reason that was responsible for the choice of the other more elevated sites in neighbour countries, because the native population was established there.

The Spaniard in Central America set his encomienda of Indians to building huge, dignified patio houses, as those of Antigua Guatemala, because that was the building plan of his ancestors, well adapted to the family system where the women were, almost, secluded women. This feeling of protection for one's womenfolk is still strong in many parts of Spanish America, but there are at least two other good defences for the patio house. They are political and seismological reasons: for, first, the patio house is a self-contained fortress in time of trouble, and next, it is fairly immune to earthquakes. When one has experienced a sharp *temblor*, with long-curve rockings and the devastating shake at the end, in an upstairs room of an hotel in Panama, the one-floor patio house, with the big empty space in the middle reached in three seconds from any room, becomes ideal at once.

A good patio house, a house of one of the old families who chose the positions that pleased them, stands upon a corner, with the front and only entrance opening upon the main street of the city. The windows, long, with the sill only a foot or two from the ground, are heavily grilled with wrought-iron in beautiful devices, and inside there may be two sets of shutters, one of glass and the outer of practically impenetrable hardwood. One of the huge double doors of the *saguan* entrance (tremendous doors often twelve feet or more high, six inches thick, and studded with iron or copper bosses) frequently has a smaller door cut in its own thickness for convenience. The doorway leads into the first patio, a gay and flowery garden with a

fountain playing in the middle, and half a dozen kinds of birds, herons, parroquets, parrots, egrets, amongst them, living amongst the palms and orange trees and blossoming vines. All the rooms of the foursquare building open upon the courtyard, with the roof projecting to form a path sheltered from rain, and of course the rooms which also look out upon the street with its possibly interesting passers-by are the most coveted. The salón is here, and perhaps the most stately bedroom; but the apartments of young and pretty daughters open only upon the patio. At the back of this first courtyard an opening leads through to another, with, as before, rooms ranged about it in a closed square; here are the kitchens, storerooms, and the quarters of certain servants; beyond there may be yet another patio, where are placed the stables, and the lodgings of the grooms. I have seen chickens, turkeys, a goat or two, and a baby puma in such a courtyard.

With the great saguan door shut and barred with the enormous iron bars of colonial times, such a house could stand a siege, and has on many occasions not only withstood assailants but put up a gallant defence from the parapet of the flat roof.

The patio house is turned in upon itself, with its garden enclosed, but on the other hand it has the advantage of giving directly on to promenades or business streets. I know one Central American who, having added greatly to his fortune by lucky rises in the price of coffee, built an English-style house on the outskirts of his city, with airy rooms looking on to the big surrounding gardens. But presently the wife and daughters raised objections; it was too dull! And the family came back to the patio house on the main avenida, where the pretty young señoritas every afternoon place silk cushions on the stone sills of the grilled windows, and, their little faces elaborately whitened and lip-sticked, lean out to chat with passers-by. At night, too, there was always some novio ready and willing to spend three or four hours standing in a dusky corner by one of these windows, his face uplifted to a coquettish shadow.

The one great drawback of the patio house in such cities as Guatemala, high-placed 5,000 feet above the sea, is that

they are not built for cold; and there are very many chilly hours between the dark and the daylight, and, for that matter, in the daylight too, in the period of heavy rains. I like Guatemala's rainy season. When it has got well into its stride it is perfectly regular, with showers beginning every afternoon about three o'clock, wiping up the dust, and creating such torrents in the streets that the civic authorities provide little wooden bridges, placed over the racing gutters at intervals along the pavement, so that the pedestrian may cross dry-shod. It is likely to rain all the evening; but as one goes to bed early, nobody cares. And what a heavenly morning when you wake! The world is just made; the sky is washed clean and sweet, and there never were such colours and such scents. Ride your horse out along the Hipodromo road when the pale violet acacia trees are in gorgeous bloom, their beautiful clusters contrasted with the row of amate trees, to the dark wood of sweet-smelling cedars; look across at the lovely cone of Agua, a blue sail in the sky, and behold the green of the Indian milpas on the tilted hill. If every morning is a bright morning, who cares if it rains at night?

But it is cold. In colonial days, the Spanish ladies had their little silver braziers, filled with glowing charcoal, and these warmed anyone who sat very close to the embers. But the braziers are gone, and as to fireplaces—oh, no! they cannot be suggested, not even in the shivering days of November, when thick woollens are the only street wear. They would make draughts, and draughts bring sickness, you are assured. Only in the house of some European *finca*, where the rooms have been built to other ideas, is there such a thing as a hearth; of course, there is no coal. Only in Talamanca is there such a thing as a developed coal-field, and this of indifferent quality, in all América Central; but there is plenty of wood in country regions. Just a few of the very daring folk are using electric heaters now, for hydro-electric power is cheap and common; one sees electric light bulbs swinging in little mud and cane huts all over the country-side of Latin America, for there never has been any gas installation to remove. Latin America went straight from tallow dips and pine chip torches to electric light.

The cold seems the more relentless on account of the pretty tiles, patterned, shiny and coloured, made in the country, that cover all the floors, like those of a Roman villa. Humbler houses are floored with red brick, of a charming hue; but the brick crumbles, and when matting or carpet is laid upon it, the crevices and dust hold tribes of ravenous fleas. In order to discourage insect pests, many dwellers in the upland tropics lay no rugs or mats at all. All the walls of houses are built of sun-dried brick, plastered and painted, and long-lasting; some of the earthquake towns, such as San José de Costa Rica, build walls with a kind of inter-lining of wattled cane, which yields to tremors without breaking. Experiments have been made in these same cities near volcanoes in building with timber, and with reinforced concrete; but timber attracts insects, and is not favoured by the Spanish dweller of the uplands, who loves his thick-walled brick house; while the concrete house is terrifically expensive and does not lose its damp and chilly feeling for years. So, unless forbidden by law, houses in Central America continue to be built of adobe, roofed with curved, burnt-sienna tiles. Even the garden walls often have this little roof, to protect the mud-brick from torrential rain.

The ordinary small family in such a city as Guatemala lives in a two-patio house, the first with a garden of blushing roses, begonia canes six feet high, and baskets of the fern called "cola de Quetzal," because its shining length is really something like the tail of that wonderful trogon; the second has a pila in the middle, the kitchen with its big poyo, and the servants' quarters.

The resident servants will be at least two in number, the cook and the housemaid; but there will be a lavandera who comes in to wash clothes—soaking them in the pila, and laying them in the sun for four days before she will iron—and probably a *mozo*, a boy, will be another daily attendant, greatly bullied by the women. The cook may do the marketing herself, entrusted with a given sum to provide food for each person, but often the mistress of the house finds it convenient and amusing to superintend this daily shopping. She sets out, neatly dressed in the prevailing fashion of London or Paris, and is followed by her Catalina, who carries two baskets, one four

feet across and eighteen inches deep, the other a good deal smaller; I prefer the maid who wears Indian costume, the guipil and the 'nagua; but when they become sophisticated these girls frequently take to the shoddy blouse and beflounced skirt of the mestiza. The great ambition of the careful domestic, however, is sometimes confined to the acquisition of more and yet more necklaces of coins and beads. In the market are bought supplies of fruit, cereals, beans, all kinds of vegetables, native products and alien foster-children of this accommodating climate; also, live chickens, and eggs. Meat is purchased in the special street of the *carnicerias*, where only one butcher in a score will cut joints on the English system, and this only to please his foreign clients. Now, with the big basket piled high, a cargadora (carrying girl) is hired for a peso or two (say, a penny) and the thick-set Indian, her white teeth flashing in a smile that illuminates her swarthy, broad face, takes the load upon her head and trots half a mile.

Induce your hostess in Guatemala to let you see the cooking-stove, the enormous super-kitchener of Central America. This poyo is a huge rectangular erection, a building, of brick, extending from the wall to the middle of the floor, and standing, solid, four feet high. There are at least two furnaces, burning logs of wood, to heat the cooking-ovens and if this is a modern house, hot water, piped to the bathroom. An iron slab covers the top of the poyo, with openings in which charcoal fires are blown to a red-hot glow. These are for grilling, frying, broiling, cooking tortillas, and heating irons. When the poyo is hot all over, after a few hours of furious stoking, it will stay hot for the rest of the day and night, and would cook food for an army.

A larder is a rarity in these houses. Food is cooked fresh for each meal, bought fresh each day. There is little reserve resource as far as meat-food is concerned; and as one result the housekeeper is extremely dependent upon her servants. So, when Catalina and Carmelita go off in times of fiesta, do not return at night, and are only heard of next morning when a police official calls to remark that they are in the lock-up for riotousness, and that the fine will be so many pesos, if the employer wants them, there are two courses open.

To pay the fine at once and get the damsels back, probably suffering from a *goma*—that is, they are gloomy, sad, exhausted from the effects of too-potent native spirit; or the mysteries of the poyo may be faced until the errant ones have had a lesson. In which case they may return, collect their belongings, and appear before the lady of the house, simply remarking: "Me voy" (I go). Why? "Tengo un disgusto" (I have a disgust). And other Catalinas must be found.

Luckily, they are plentiful.

CHAPTER IV

ANTIGUA GUATEMALA

The Road to Antigua—Mixco—San Rafael—Santa Lucia—St. James of the Gentlemen of Guatemala—Alvarado—Doña Beatriz—Ciudad Vieja—The Seminario—Churches—Cathedral—The Merced—The Bethlemites—San Antonio—San Felipe—The Earthquake Saint—Transference of the City—Ascent of Agua—Fuego.

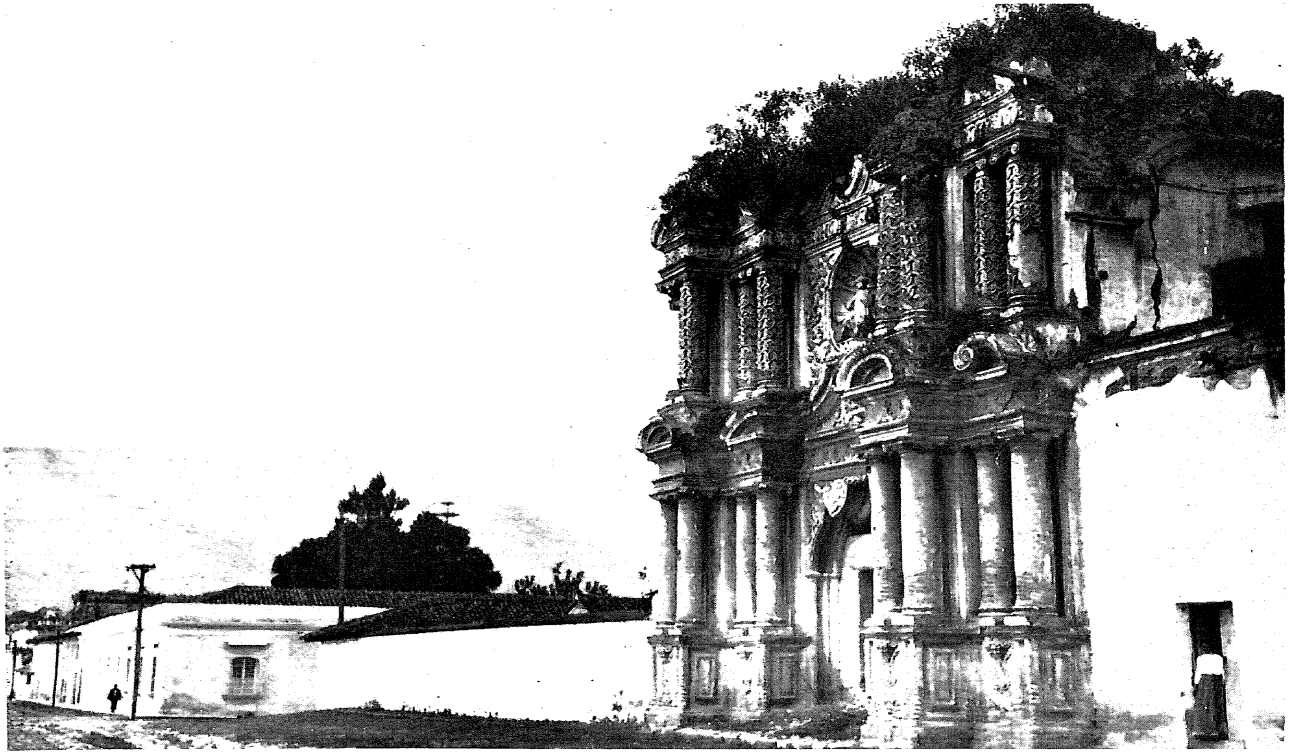
YOU must go by the high road to Antigua Guatemala, for happily there is no railway. And, with a choice between motor-car, mule-drawn diligencia, and horseback, choose the last; there is no better means, if you want to see the wayside. The motor is too fast, and the road is as a rule too rough—repairs to the surface do not last long, what with violent rains, and great heat, and solid-wheeled ox-carts; and the diligencia, while amusing enough with your party, has its drawbacks. I once made this trip with three friends in a diligencia; we had six mules, brisk, hard-mouthed, opinionated animals which, at the end of a thirty-mile gallop, dashed up to the Manchen hotel with as man-eating a look in the whites of their eyes, and as much kick in their hoofs, as when they started. The diligencia rattled and slid over the huge cobbles of Guatemala's outlying streets as we set off, the broad-faced driver shouted, whistled between his teeth, an ear-splitting sound, while he cracked an enormous whip, long enough to curl round all the mules at once, in a series of smart explosions; and incessantly the mules' bells jangled. This uproar lasted all day long.

From Guatemala the way to Antigua leads down the Reforma road, where the blue cones of the volcanoes come into view, past the gay new houses of the Santa Clara region, to the railway crossing at Pamplona; so far the road is well laid out, broad,

and shaded with plantations of pines. Next, after more level miles, the outskirts of the valley of Guatemala are passed, with their sun-dried-brick walls topped with red tiles, and a "Spanish-dagger" agave flourishing from a crack with its spike of white bells. Then the road begins to climb towards the hill-crest Indian town of Mixco.

A deep barranca is crossed by a bridge, and the hill rises sharply, while the road twists violently; there is a grass-grown, cobbled path that runs off the main high road, a short cut to the top, that only a Guatemalan-bred mule could face; or the Mixco Indian women with their boldly-patterned guipiles, embroidered red belts, and blue skirts. They trot up and down without turning a hair, although they frequently carry a baby slung from the shoulders as well as a very wide and well-loaded basket upon the head. Mixco women wear a cloth, folded flat in much the fashion of that worn by an Italian contadina, on their heads, and a white mantle over their shoulders; and, geographically near as they are to sophisticated Guatemala, these Mixco folk have an air of pride, of ancient manners, a curious look of aloofness and bold defence. They have been Christianized for 400 years, and it is the last thing one would think of them.

Beyond Mixco there are long fields where ancient pottery and stone idols of the old gods are continually turned up; and presently you will see a farmhouse whose doorway is guarded by two rotund stone figures graved by long past and forgotten folk. The road rises, turning continually, so that far below you look down upon the whole Valle de las Vacas, the Valley of the Cows where Guatemala City lies, her white walls sweetly robed in green gardens from this high distance. Then begins a descent, with ravines on one side wreathed with wild bamboo and shrubs, adorned with the bright gold blossoms of a tree sunflower; on the other hand are tall rocks where little rivulets run and masses of maidenhair fern hang from every crevice. Not that this is wild country, a raw country; you are constantly reminded of the fact that this is an ancient land breeding an ancient race, for wherever a pocket of earth is collected, here is a tiny milpa, a field no bigger, perhaps, than a table-cloth; and where the land is open, one looks over a



RUINS OF THE CARMEN CHURCH, ANTIGUA, GUATEMALA

wall, bedecked with little pink double roses, to see spreading fields of sugar-cane or maize. Here, before aniline dyes drove all others from the markets, used to grow great fields of the nopal cactus on which the cochineal insect thrived; little patches of this cactus are still cultivated, for the sake of the fine red colour that the Indians love, as they also love the blue of indigo—there, by the wayside, are its leaves; a few plants are grown in every finca so that white clothes may be "blued.' These level lands, where the Guatemalan saddle horse breaks into the comfortable "triple" of the all-day ride, have yielded crops, probably, as long as British fields have yielded wheat.

The road begins to rise again, and presently the edge of a deep barranca and a thicket of trees heralds the approach of San Rafael. There is no village here: nothing but a wayside inn. And it is the sort of inn that the blessed San Rafael himself, patron saint of travellers, might keep. It lies in a garden on the left side of the road as you come from Guatemala, with a mountain shoulder behind it; the path runs on to a precipice corner, and beyond it appears the beautiful cone of Agua volcano, transparent blue in the noon air. There is a mossy fountain in the open garden, and violets and lilies and roses mingle their perfume with that of deep shadowy pines. The house stands back, its wide door always open, and the sunlight falling upon the red tiles of the floor of the room that is comidor (dining-room) and cantina in one. Food seems to be always cooking in the big, half open-air kitchen at the back, and at whatever hour you may arrive it seems possible, in a moment, to find placed before you a deep plate of thick, purple-brown soup made with black beans. Delicious black beans of Central America! Rice is ready, too, cooked with yellow saffron and bits of red pepper, piled on the edge of the dish that carries your *huevos al plato*, that is, eggs broken on to a plate and cooked lightly in the oven or over a charcoal fire; and ready, too, is the chicken stew with yuca and chayote and tomatoes. A pretty, barefoot Indian girl, her round cheek tinged with russet-orange, waits smilingly upon travellers.

The hotel is built of adobe, washed with pale pink; and when you have eaten you must not go on your way without looking

at the beds of thick, fragrant violets on the steep slope behind the house, where a bright stream trickles through the little wood; or the garden across the road, that tips over the side of the deep ravine, where strawberries and melons, peaches and raspberry canes, climb over the brink. Far below, a brook runs in the bottom of the barranca, and the sheer side opposite is green with wild forest; it is the source of San Rafael's fuel supply.

On again, with the guarding mountains of Antigua shifting their position as the road winds, in a series of lovely pictures; it is well to spare a look now and again at the near-by plants that spring from the living rock on one hand or stand upon the mud wall protecting the gorge on the other; here are blue as well as scarlet salvias; big tawny marigolds; trees covered with white daisies and small sunflowers; long canes of pink fuchsia, ferns of infinite delicacy; a deep red honeysuckle and immense blackberries in flower and fruit. From the branches of old trees the tufted tillandsias droop fire-red fingers, and there are hundreds of small orchids. The wealth of vegetation is extraordinary even for Guatemala, for here we are 7,000 feet up, and sub-tropic as well as temperate-zone plants flourish in the warm, mountain-ringed valleys.

This road runs off to Chimaltenango; that, to Quezaltenango; through a draggled village of *ladinos*, half-blood folk; then comes a sharp and long descent into Antigua, lying spread like a map, with its lines of streets running clean east and west and north and south, the huge ancient plaza and great cathedral and a dozen other majestic ruins breaking the chess-board pattern. Your horse faces any descent casually enough, and can be trusted; but the driver of a diligencia here checks his team, gets down, hacks a young tree from the wayside with his machete, and ties small logs to the brakes on either side. All is now safe, and the diligencia is launched down the mountain-side, the mules frisking at full gallop, and the passengers hurtling from side to side. By some miracle the diligencia does not overturn. We stop, panting, outside a blistering cottage in a little village, Santa Lucia, where an excited Guatemalteco dashes at us, waving a bescrawled paper. Your names! For here, as in the trains, it is required that every

male traveller shall write down something (I have seen the space remarkably filled) to satisfy the law. Shall the ladies sign, we inquire, knowing better. He is shocked. Oh, no! No, Señora! this is a thing of the police, of politics . . . ladies are in no wise concerned. . . . He bows the party off with Spanish gallantry.

Just as the sun begins to lay long violet shadows across the volcanoes we enter the environs of La Antigua. Its long, gracious streets are silent, in the siesta that has endured for a hundred and fifty years.

For me no other city has the sweet content, the sufficing quality, of Antigua Guatemala; the opal colours of its pavements and houses, the high-held cones of the volcanic rampart, the splendid apparitions of Spain that haunt the great houses, are not all. There is an insistent sense of a spring of life from within, a sense renewed by the constant presence of the ancient folk, gaily and strangely dressed; and there is the perennial, opulent sunshine, the beauty of woodland and stream. I am trying to add up the component parts of the secret of Antigua Guatemala, and I hesitate: for I have met people who find the place dull. I am glad they do find it dull; may they never come here! May there never be a railway to bring tourists! never a host of mechanisms, nothing, in fact, that will again anger the old gods sleeping beneath the great peaks of the volcanoes, appeased to-day by their century and a half of quiet.

The streets of Antigua Guatemala are very clean. The carriage-way is paved with diamond-shaped, flat blocks of stone, set in such a manner that there is a depression in the very middle of the street to form a drain that carries off flood water in the time of heavy rain. On such a street there is neither dust nor mud. At either hand are footpaths of tiles, patterned and often brightly coloured, and very hard. The walls and houses bordering these streets are built of sun-dried brick, plastered and colour-washed with cunning, so that a smooth pink and blue, or pale yellow and jade, surface is presented. The roofs are of soft, old, red tiles, deeply curved; and an open doorway is invariably a peep into an insouciant

green gardens. This is not the first city of the Spaniards in Guatemala. The original city of Santiago was set up by Alvarado where the village of Tecpan Guatemala stands to-day, and, when it was made untenable by the uprisings of the Kakchiquel tribes, the settlers moved during Alvarado's absence in Spain to Almolonga, founding the Ciudad Vieja at the foot of the Volcan de Agua. That second Santiago was founded in 1527; a ride of half an hour from Antigua will bring you to its ruins, with a modern and pretty Indian village beside them. Here are thick pieces of wall still upstanding, fragments of the Adelantado's palace, and in the scrub are less conspicuous remains of masonry. At the corner of a little lane that seems to climb up the sides of Agua is a tiny shrine, a little, white-painted, arched place of prayer, kept neat and sweet with bunches of flowers, where travellers may rest and think for a moment of the ill-fated Doña Beatriz, widow for two months of that handsome, brave, cruel Conquistador called by the Mexicans, for the sake of his fair head, Tonatiuh, "The Sun." After his campaigns of conquest in Guatemala and Salvador, Alvarado went in 1526 to Spain and secured, together with his title of Adelantado of Guatemala, the hand of a noble lady, Doña Francisca de la Cueva. She died on the return journey, in Mexico, and Alvarado came back alone, with no child growing up in this palace at the foot of the volcano but the girl Leonor, his daughter by an Indian woman, a Tlascalan of high tribal rank.

The city flourished: there were seventy subject villages of Indians, and it received an official title—la Muy Noble y Muy Leal Ciudad de Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala; a coat of arms was bestowed in 1532, and a year later the first Bishop came to the city.

In 1534 Alvarado completed the building of ships at the little port of Iztapa (a few miles south of San José, at the mouth of the Michatoya river, outlet of Amatitlán lake) for the transportation of 500 Spanish soldiers, half of them horsemen, who volunteered to accompany him in an expedition to the Isles of Ind, the balmy Spice Isles of Spain's desire. But news came to the city of Guatemala of the extraordinary success in Peru of Pizarro, and Alvarado determined that he

would change his route to the south, and seize Quito, before Pizarro should reach that region. He carried out this plan—landed on the Ecuadorian coast, marched to the highlands of Riobamba, met an envoy of the alarmed Pizarro, and here made an arrangement to retire from the scene, leaving his troops behind, for a price of 100,000 *pesos de oro*.

Alvarado went back to Spain, and courted and married the lovely Beatriz de la Cueva, younger sister of his first wife. She returned with him to Guatemala, travelling in great state with maids and Negro slaves, and twenty beautiful Spanish ladies of noble birth. A few years, organizing, governing, subduing the recurrent risings of the now angered Kakchiquel, and then, in June of 1540, Alvarado was away again, sailing with an expedition in search of the Seven Cities of Cibola. Calling in at the port of Jalisco, Mexico, for more volunteers, he answered an appeal for help in crushing a rebellion, and near Guadalajara met his death, not from battle, but accidentally, from injuries caused by the horse of a companion. In Guadalajara he died a few days later, on June 29th, 1541, at the age of fifty-six, after twenty-two years of Mexico and América Central. He was born in the same Spanish city, Badajoz in Estremadura, and in the same year, as his leader Hernan Cortés.

He was a hard man to the conquered Indians, it is said. As he lay a-dying a comrade asked him: "Where does your Highness suffer most?" And Alvarado answered: "In my soul."

July and August passed in the city of Guatemala, with no news of the Adelantado: then came the terrible truth. Alvarado was dead! The lovely Doña Beatriz, passionately in love with her magnificent husband, drove priests from her door, refused all consolation, cried out against heaven, and draped and painted the palace with black, saying that heaven could have no worse day in store. To her the Cabildo assigned the power of governorship, and now, when documents must be signed, she wrote herself down: "La Sinventura Doña Beatriz," sometimes crossing out the last two words, so that her signature was only that of "The unhappy one."

Within a few days the city was strangely destroyed, and six hundred people killed in the catastrophe; amongst the dead was the beautiful Luckless One herself, and so strong was the superstitious feeling that her sacrilegious grief had incurred the wrath of heaven that there were folk who demanded that her drowned body, found floating with her long hair entangled in the branches of trees, should be refused burial and thrown to the dogs.

The cause of the destruction is still a mystery; but it is certain that the old explanation is not correct. Water, it was said, was thrown out from the crater of the volcano; or, as an alternative when doubts were thrown upon this assertion, water collected in the old crater, burst the edge, and descended in a devastating flood. But as Maudslay has pointed out, "an examination of the crater shows this explanation to be improbable, as the break in the crater-wall is in an opposite direction, and no water flowing from it could have reached the town." Nor, in fact, does the deep part of the crater retain water.

But this is the story. On September 8th torrential rain began, continuing in fury all day during the 9th and 10th. After dark on the 10th of September tremors were felt, and, after one severe shock about nine o'clock, an overwhelming flood poured down the side of the volcano, bearing with it huge boulders and uprooted trees. Doors were battered in, walls broken and swept away, and scores of people drowned, with their herds and flocks, in the torrent. In the Governor's palace, Doña Beatriz went with eleven of her ladies to a little chapel newly built on the roof, and there the storm and flood broke into this frail refuge, cast them forth and drowned them. Alvarado's half-Indian daughter, Leonor, was luckier. She was found next day, clinging to a tree, and lived to marry a relative, Don Francisco la de Cueva, of her father's high-born wife.

The body of Doña Beatriz, with the remains of Pedro de Alvarado, presently brought from Mexico, were laid in the church of the ruined city; but from the unlucky spot the town council decided to move, selecting the site of La Antigua with the aid of the celebrated engineer Antonelli. Streets

were laid out and paved, buildings set up, and in November of 1542 the succeeding Governor, Maldonado, with the Bishop and the town officials in splendid procession, rode out and took possession of the new capital that is now the Old, leaving the Ciudad Vieja to the Indians whose sunny village stands among the green fields.

Return along the lanes to Antigua Guatemala and see how fine a city was built by the hands of the Indian artisans of the sixteenth century under Spanish direction. Never do I walk these enchanted streets of Antigua without rejoicing in their creation during a period of fine and generous ideas of architecture. Plenty of labour was here, and plenty of solid material, stone and almost imperishable hardwoods, cement and clay, to carry out the massive designs with their Moorish impress. Look, for example, if you can find it, into the great patio of the old University, and in that part still used as a school, the Seminario, are lovely fretted arches that seem to have come straight from Granada.

I did not find this particular court until my third visit to the Antigua, but one morning discovered an open door in the thick wall of the University block, a wall displaying escutcheons between the sexagonal, deep, grated windows. Inside was a bright patio full of scented flowers, with Alhambra-like arcades at the end where horses were stabled; and here was a courtly Guatemalteco who not only displayed the carved stone of his own house, but took me through a little printing shop into the Seminario itself. So little care is there for these beauties that a part of the University building is leased to a moving-picture company. Seeing this, I felt glad that, if Antigua was to be abandoned, it was left before mechanisms could be inflicted upon it; were this still the Capital street-cars would certainly run though the ancient streets, and here and there the great walls would be hewn down for the creation of shops with glass show-windows. There is no such thing as a modern shop in the whole length and breadth of La Antigua. Not that you cannot buy food, and cloth for clothes—there is the endlessly attractive market, and there are the little dark caverns of shops, lighted only by the door, of the big

plaza. There you may purchase woven goods by the *vara*, and every kind of edible thing in the country, and lovely embroidered Indian cotton cloth.

It would take a month at least to explore every ruin (of churches and cloisters: there are no other ruined buildings in Antigua), for every lane has a rich façade to display. Most interesting are the noble piles of the cathedral, the Franciscans' church, the Jesuits' church and "convento," the church of the Recoleto, of Santa Cruz, of Espiritu Santo and of San Sebastian. The beautiful Merced is not a ruin; its stout door-pillars, with deep carved vines twisted about them, open into a rich interior that has survived all troubles and is constantly in use. So is the pretty Calvario, outside the city at the end of a shady avenue of amate trees; against a background of blue-green woods stands a gateway of engaging pink, leading down a white-bordered path to the church, where two sweet and spotless chapels open at the side of the main doorway, with its porch carved into the semblance of a great shell. Once, they say, this Calvario was celebrated for its fine paintings transferred to New Guatemala in 1777; hundreds of *milagros*, little wax models of hands and arms, and so on, cured of affliction, testify to the wonders still worked here.

Antigua Cathedral is a splendid ruin, although its roofless interior is choked with wild dahlias and sunflowers, the haunt of goats driven here by little brown-skinned urchins who run through the half-hidden tunnel passages and on the tops of the massive walls. No one knows what has become of the tomb of Alvarado, shown, although empty, to Stephens in 1840; for here his bones were carried from the older city, as one reads in documents of the Spanish archives. It was in the year 1568 that Don Francisco de la Cueva, husband of Alvarado's daughter Leonor, presented a petition to the ecclesiastical authorities of Guatemala, praying that he might be allowed to remove the bones of Pedro de Alvarado, of Beatriz his wife, and of Pedro Puertocarrero, from the tomb in the chapel of the old city "que desbaraté el volcán," to the cathedral in the new Guatemala. All the expenses, says the petition, will be borne by Don Francisco, and he also offers 2,140 pesos annually henceforth for masses to be said by a chaplain, and

another 140 pesos a year for candles. The authorities agreed, and in the cathedral the Adelantado, his wife, and his old comrade in arms, were laid to rest for a space.

The cathedral is 300 feet long, 120 feet wide; it was lighted by seventy windows, and there were sixteen chapels. Climb by a dark turret stair to the roof, and here is a miniature village of beehive huts—the cement tops of innumerable domes. From gaping apertures in this roof, whereon you walk, you look down at stucco angels, buskined and petticoated, with censers in their hands, smiling from their ringlets. Gone are the ivory statuettes of the apostles, and gone the sixteen pillars, covered with tortoiseshell, that once supported the high altar; but an impression of the beauty of the cathedral in its great day is still dimly conveyed by the two chapels still in use—the Sagrario and the Guadalupe. The house of the Bishop, attached to the cathedral, shows its ruined door on the platform above the wide flight of enormous steps that leads from the plaza to the great entrance of the cathedral, closed for over a century. One corner of the bishop's house has been long in use as a telegraph office, and ensconced behind the main door, a huge wreck beautifully studded with metal bosses, is the workshop of a most courtly tinsmith. Pass, guided by his bow, into the patio where nothing but motley rubbish is stored, and where a mule or two finds precarious stabling, and you will see an example of Indian-Spanish stucco decoration, upon arches in a patio of exquisite proportions. All about the court is a forest of round pillars, delicately painted, and connected by arches; above rises an upper gallery, likewise arched and pillared, and in half ruin that will soon be irretrievable.

Another fine wreck is that of the church and cloister of the Society of Jesus, one *cuadra* (block) from the main plaza, of which large spaces are given over to the public market. When I first visited Antigua, the gaily-dressed Indian women from surrounding villages pitched their little square awnings of matting all over the great open plaza and there, each under her tent, sold pottery and fruits and so on. But later this ancient custom was forbidden, a bandstand was erected in

the middle of the market square, and the market folk banished to the Jesuits' Church. It is roofless and uncared-for; against the richly-carved front a blacksmith had set his forge and a chimney.

Of the Merced I have already spoken. Unforgettable is the occasion when I was bidden there by a businesslike priest, to see a memorial mass; the church was draped from what seemed like enormous heights, to the tiled floor, with purple and black silk; silver candlesticks six feet high stood in rows along the nave, and above the great altar floated a lovely waxen Virgin, in clouds of pale blue and silver gauze; pink wax cherubs were suspended to attend her. Upon the floor knelt a really lovely young widow, of a pure Spanish type, while the priest my friend, in vestments of breathless magnificence, went through the ritual. Afterwards he took me for a drive all about the city, displaying his coffee estates, once the property of the Church of the Recollection, in excellent condition, now and again stopping to lecture somebody sternly, or to drop his hand to be kissed by some bareheaded suppliant. A cheerful, jolly, busy soul, full of common sense. A relative of his was running a furniture factory, using beautiful native hardwoods and Indian skill, in a disused *convento*—the very cloister of Belen that is associated with the romantic story of that high-born Don Rodrigo Arias Maldonado y Velasco who became a monk and the first General of the Bethlemite Order.

Don Rodrigo was young, handsome, and came in 1666 to Guatemala with all the prestige of successful discovery in Costa Rica, and of his position as ex-Governor of that province. Here, in the capital, all aristocratic doors were open to him, and before long he fell deeply in love with a beautiful woman, the wife of an elderly official of high rank. But one dark night, Don Rodrigo stole a few secret moments with the lady, and, overcome with emotion, she died in his arms. Desperate, he rushed into the street, ready to blurt out the awful truth to the first comer—who happened to be a Bethlemite brother. He, insisting upon silence, hurried the distracted man to his cell; and from that moment Don Rodrigo gave himself to the life of a religious exchanging poverty and abnegation for his

gay and proud career. But, a man of action, he succeeded to the headship of the brotherhood, then went to Spain and obtained authority to convert the brotherhood into a monastic Order, and built the big Belen cloister on whose roofs you can walk to-day, looking at the eternal ring of volcanoes.

The tomb of Pedro de Betencourt, he who befriended Don Rodrigo on the night of tragedy, and then the head of the brotherhood, stands in a little chapel preserved amongst the ruin of the San Francisco church. A tall grating protects this tomb of the revered Hermano Pedro, and all over are hung the little wax arms and legs that tell of pain and disease; for the good Brother is still active to help the suffering. But there is a special formula. For the tomb of Brother Peter is locked with three keys, of which one is in Rome, one is held by the Bishop of Guatemala, and one by the Municipality of the city. Therefore, before you can wake the Hermano Pedro to cure your toothache, you must knock upon his tomb three times.

A dominant shape in Antigua is the Arco de Santa Catarina that spans the street with its discreet covered bridge, so that nuns could pass from one part of the convent to the other without drawing the gaze of the passer-by; and not to be missed is the once-splendid Casa de Moneda, the Royal Mint, with its stone pillars flanking the great saguan door, and the stone lions of Castile beside them. Inside the patio are stone stairs to the upper floor, with old hardwood pillars supporting the upper gallery. A wheelwright occupies this fine patio, and some of the rooms of the Mint are used as the Monte de Piedad—the local pawnshop.

Whenever I tired of eloquent ruins in Antigua, I rode out to one of the near-by villages, perhaps to assure myself that, although foreign-planned cities might come and go, the ancient folk, the people of the soil, survived, and seem likely to survive. There is San Antonio, with its big open square and church, the pila where every woman is washing clothes under the blue sky. The clothes of the men are peculiar, and nobody but the Segundo Alcalde—a kind of Deputy-mayor—understands a word of Spanish. Everybody else speaks a Maya dialect. And although these Kakchiquel villagers have not, in 400

LA MERCED CHURCH, ANTIGUA, GUATEMALA

years, troubled to learn the tongue of the Spaniards, yet they call themselves "Conquistadores" also, because some of their ancestors fought with the Europeans against their own kinsmen the Quichés. Kakchiquel Indians were given special privileges by the Spanish Crown, and for a long time claimed certain exemptions from taxation from the Government of Guatemala.

All such Indian towns are neat and orderly, hedged with bamboo fences cunningly laced, the houses well-built and thickly thatched, the lanes straight and deep; there is an air of self-respect which the villages of mixed-blood people too often lack.

Another Indian centre is San Felipe, renowned for miraculous cures, where the recumbent figure of the *Señor Sepultado* is the centre of innumerable wax scraps of anatomy and of dramatic pictures of rescues; outlines of the feet of pilgrims are cut into the pavement before the entrance; and in another direction is San Miguel Dueñas, of old foundation, and with a remarkably long church. I wonder if the little cantina still bears the inscription painted on the wall that I noted a few years ago; its name was *Te Bolbi á Ber*, which, discounting the common mistake between b's and v's in Spanish America, means "I came back to see you." A change from the more usual names of Guatemalan cantinas—the "Rain of Gold," "Little Heaven," "Twenty-first of September," and so on.

More than thirty Indian villages were subject to Antigua Guatemala in its first years, and in each a canonigo took up his residence and built a church, judiciously adapting the old pagan practices to Christianity. The Indians, in fact, identified many of their deities with the saints of the Roman calendar, and here lay the root cause for the fierce opposition in native strongholds to the "Liberals" of the early Independence period, who attacked the church openly and violently. Rafael Carrera, the Indian youth who could not sign his name when he first appeared at the head of masses of Indians of Guatemala to oppose the troops of Morazan, would never have made headway against that trained soldier had not the whole force of the religious feeling of the great undercurrent-population been with him; and, whatever loosening of religious ties the

educated upper classes may experience, attachment to the saints is still a tremendously strong feeling amongst the million and a half people of nearly pure Indian blood.

Some ten miles north-west of Antigua, on the way to Patzum and Lake Atitlán, there is a village named Izapa, where a farmer grew rich some years since. He consulted the padre regarding a gift for the church, and presently a very beautiful new figure of the patron saint was brought from Spain, and with due ceremony was given the place of honour on the pedestal formerly occupied by such crude wooden images as you may see relegated to the vestry of the church of San Lucas, on Atitlán's margin. But the Indians whispered their discontent and soon afterwards a deputation came to the priest. "Please, señor padre, let us have our old saint again!" they petitioned. "This new one speaks only Spanish, and he does not understand our language." The padre was dismayed, but hit upon a happy compromise. "The new saint must remain, but behind him we will put the old figure, and he will hear your prayers and interpret them to the new arrival." And so it was, and there they are.

Return from these expeditions to Antigua in the soft dusk, and you will agree with John Lloyd Stephens, who wrote in 1840 that "as we entered the valley, the scene was so beautiful I did not wonder that even earthquakes could not make it desolate." For to the earthquakes is popularly assigned the abandonment of Antigua. It is true that there are tremors; I have never stayed for more than a few days in the city without hearing the silver knockers of the doors rap gently, or finding, at night, the bed wavering under me; but it is more than doubtful if the city would have been left on account of the *temblores* had not other reasons added weight.

From the time of its building in 1542, a host of religious bodies took possession of estates—Franciscans, Dominicans, Bethlemites, Jesuits, Barefoot Carmelites, Sisters and Brothers of Mercy, Capuchins and Augustinians, had their churches and cloisters; Third Orders flourished (they who were "in the world but not of it") and thirty fraternities; the whole city was divided into three parishes, of San Sebastian, Remedios and Candelaria.

The histories say that earthquakes were felt from the first days; but it is impossible that they were severe, or the city could not have grown and flourished as it did. In 1565 the citizens demanded that the tremors should have a tutelary saint, and the town council in solemn session, after a lot of wrangling regarding qualifications, appointed San Sebastian and thenceforth held him responsible. It was on a later occasion that the fire-emitting volcano of Fuego was formally baptized by clerics at the head of a procession that climbed his angry sides, but the ancient gods displayed their annoyance by an outburst of fire and flame. The local Indians will ascend Agua without a murmur, but even to-day there is hesitation to climb Fuego, whose Indian name is never spoken aloud. Underneath that uneasy mountain is the great god Mam, says one legend, and when Mam turns in his sleep the earth trembles.

By the year 1776 the city had 6,000 houses of Spaniards, and there were twenty-two public fountains, including warm and medicinal waters which were led to private baths of the wealthy. The first school, founded in La Vieja in 1531 for the "sons of Conquistadores only," had been supplemented by the famous College of St. Thomas, and, in 1678, by the Royal and Pontifical University of San Carlos de Borromeo; in 1690 the College of San Francisco de Borja was built. The Jesuits' College flourished, but was closed when this Order was expelled in 1767. Altogether, the city and church area with the estates of clerics and nobles are said to have covered 7,000 acres, before the earthquakes of 1776.

In that year severe tremors were felt in May and June, and in July fire and ashes were thrown from the crater of Fuego, accompanied by the deep underground roarings, *retumbos*, still frequently heard in Guatemala. Tiles flew from the roofs, torrential rains fell, and 123 people were killed. In July a new Governor arrived, and he presently insisted upon transferring his official residence to the little hermitage in the valley of the Rio de las Vacas, which, as Gage recorded more than a century previously, was "the Parish-Church to all those several farms of Spaniards living in the Valley." A determined man, Governor Mayorga next captured the Town

Council, forced them to hold a meeting on the near-by site originally chosen, in the adjoining Vale of Panchoy, and, assisted by the anti-clerical party of the citizens, decreed the political evacuation of the city of Guatemala. The great bulk of the inhabitants refused to go, but Spain emphasized the order, and the Governor demanded that the priests should influence their women parishioners (who are said to have clung, weeping, to the very altars of the lovely Antigua churches) to leave their homes. New sites were then offered to the various Orders, equal to the spaces occupied by their churches and convents in the old city, and while they were forced to abandon their rich farms and villages, the clerics made the best of a bad job. My friend the padre of the Merced was firmly convinced of the truth of the tale that blames no earthquake for the wreck of the thirty-eight churches of La Antigua; observe, said he, how firm upon their foundations stand this and that building—the Seminario, the Arch of St. Catherine, the Mint, the long expanse of colonnades of the Governmental buildings lining the great plaza. Not tremors, but gunpowder, placed by those who had to hasten the exodus, accounts for these tragic ruins, declares the padre.

From Antigua it is easy enough to make the ascent of Agua. Travellers find it agreeable to make up a party, and to allow three days for the whole trip. But it can be done in less. Arrangements are generally made in Antigua, for mules, a guide (who must also be cook and baggage-master), bedding and food, and by the most comfortable route one leaves Antigua on an afternoon in the dry season. From Antigua you ride without hurry to the Indian village of Santa Maria, about ten miles distant, sleep there for a few hours, and start off again at three or four in the morning for the ascent. Santa Maria nestles right in the skirts of Agua, in a beautifully fertile nook where every fruit and flower of the sub-tropics flourishes; the dead crater of the volcano is no more than 5,000 feet above, and the road rises without difficulty to the break in the rim where one enters. At this altitude, rather more than 7,000 feet above sea-level, beautiful maize and barley fields lie like green handkerchiefs on the lower slopes of the

volcano, with orchards of peaches and oranges, and vegetable gardens neatly cultivated, and dark glistening plantations of coffee. The early morning air is of a wonderful clarity and sweetness, showing in bright colours the city of Antigua 2,000 feet below and, upon one side and another as the road twists the enormous shoulder of Fuego. Past the limit of cultivation and a belt of scrub one enters a pine belt, generally so muddy underfoot that the path, now steeper, is the worst of the whole trip. Until the last few years the Indians kept up an ancient custom of ascending to this part of Agua in order to gather a harvest of gravelly icicles from the shallow, round-topped caves that one sees here, as along the roads above Atitlán ; the pack of icy scraps found a sale in the city below ; but since ice-factories have been set up this trade has dwindled. At the end of the forest belt there is still another slope, negotiable by any decent mule, where myrtillaceous shrubs and coarse grass predominate, before the broken crater wall looms in front. Scramble over rocks and through wet, thick grass, into this huge bowl, and here is the night's camping-ground, cold and forbidding, nearly always invaded by mist at night. It measures over 400 feet in width, and is walled with dark rocks 300 feet high. It is perfectly possible, even when walking the whole way from and back to Santa Maria, to perform the journey in a day, but worth while to see a dawn from this fine summit—Amatitlán shining below, the rampart of the Central American volcanoes towards the coast, and, with luck, the blue gleam of the Pacific. With still greater luck one may hope to see what the Maudslays saw in 1894 :

" As the sun rose clear and bright we beheld a sight so interesting and beautiful that it alone would have repaid us for the miseries of the night, for at that moment a ghost-like shadowy dark blue mountain rose high above all the others and as we gazed wondering we saw that it was the shadow of Agua projected on the atmosphere, moving as the sun rose higher and gradually sinking until it lay, a clear-cut black triangle, against the slopes of Fuego."

It has never been my luck to climb Fuego. But to reach its summit you had best go first to the village of Alotenango, and then, starting early in the morning, take mules to climb as

far as possible through the thick forest. There is a level camping space at about 11,000 feet, but the cold is extreme, and plenty of thick woollen clothing and rugs must be carried. At about 12,000 feet vegetation ceases, and only grassy scrub-land, and cinder slopes denuded by the volcano, are in sight. The crater itself, and near-by vent-holes, are constantly smoking.

CHAPTER V

AMATITLÁN AND FRIAR GAGE

The Road to the Pacific—Lake Amatitlán—An English Friar in Central America.

THE rocky Highlands of Guatemala, "Los Altos," form a different world from that of the lush green Atlantic coast, the sweet upland valleys, the hot dry Pacific littoral. The highlands were the ancient strongholds of the Quiché folk whom the Spanish had to conquer before they could reach the fertile vales on a lower level, and they are still populous, industrious, famous for their mines, for the one great cotton mill of Guatemala, Cantel, and for the production of a particularly hardy race of politicians.

The capital of the Altos is Quezaltenango, the "place of the quetzal," the beautiful glittering bird whose feathers were paid as tribute by the Quiché to Mexico after Montezuma's grandfather entered and exacted contributions from the people of Guatemala; and within rideable distance are two other ancient Quiché strongholds, Iximché or Tecpan Guatemala, and Ututlán. There are many other fascinating places in the Quiché country, but, while you will be safe in limb and pocket here as in all Central America, a land of kindly folk, you must not demand comfort according to ordinary hotel standards. Forget them!

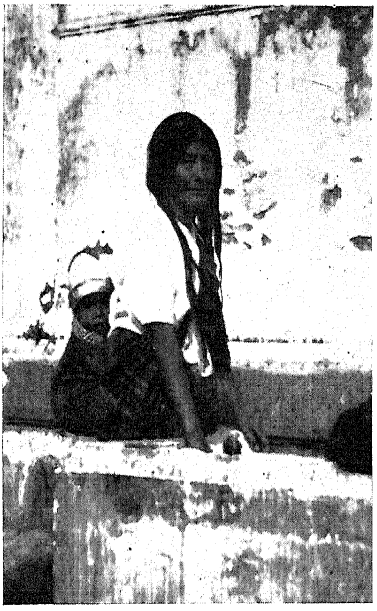
In this region you will ascend to over 8,000 feet, and find populations living not in valleys but on breezy tablelands and on the very sides of live volcanoes. Between this hill country and the Pacific is one of the great coffee regions of Central America, the "Costa Grande," that is not coast at all, but a foothill region of infinite fertility and delightful climate. There is rail access from Retalhuleu to the sea at Champerico;

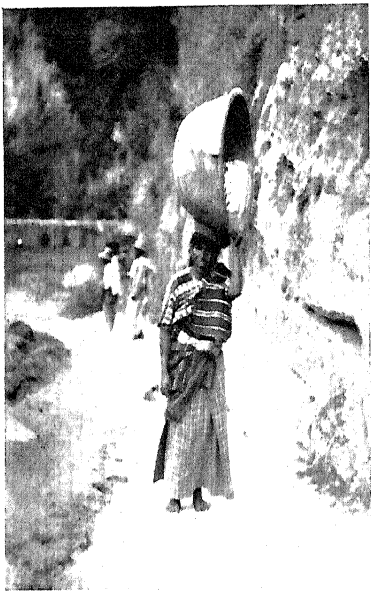
and from Guatemala to the Altos you may take the train as far as San Felipe. But although the line is planned, the rugged mountainous country of the Quiché is still reached by open roads where mules and horses climb, and the feet of Indians trot ceaselessly.

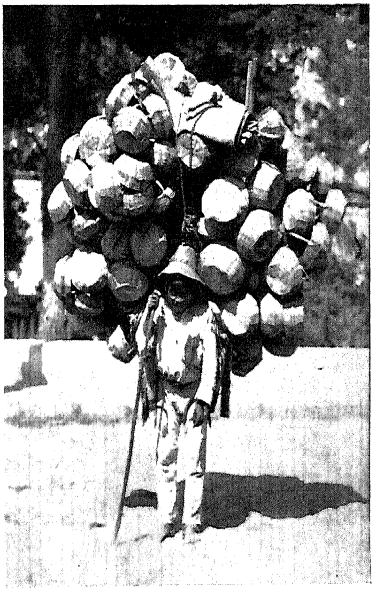
For this descent towards the Pacific, and swerve to the north, you must take the six o'clock train from Guatemala City in the fresh dawn. Running for a short distance along the valley's neck, the line presently begins to drop. When the road has descended 1,000 feet the hills, draped with plumy ferns, open to a lovely dip that encloses the Lake of Amatitlán. An embankment has been built across the shallower part of the lake, and across this the railway runs. The whole length of the line from Guatemala City to the Pacific is about seventy miles, ending at the port of San José de Guatemala, where a lazy little village, a wooden sprawling hotel, a pier and the customs house are the chief points of interest. The Pacific rollers pound upon black volcanic sand, the peaks of Guatemala's famous cones stand up, deeper blue against the blue sky, and the steamer lies out in the open roadstead. But we are only as far as Amatitlán.

Travellers may, if they will, spend time at Lake Amatitlán. There is a little wooden hotel hard by the station on the lake shore, and there is a village which, despite contact with Europeans for 400 years, retains Indian characteristics. The balcony of your bare room at this hotel overhangs the lake, and you look out upon a beautiful flotilla of water hyacinths. Their boat-leaves are of a lovely green, finely varnished, and their sails are translucent spikes of light mauve-blue flowers, painted with yellow. These water hyacinths are, they say, a curse, in some regions of the tropic Americas—they choke irrigation dykes, invade and trouble impudently such commercially important waters as the lakes of the Panama Canal. But they are so beautiful, so fresh and vigorous that it is a joy to find a wide water where they are neither unwelcome nor challenged: here upon the soft waters of Amatitlán no one disturbs them.

Close by the hotel, the margin of the lake is clear of plants,







WAYSIDE TYPES OF THE GUATEMALAN UPLANDS

and a fine cloud seems to linger; nor is your imagination at fault. Underground fires heat the lake at certain points to a fairly high temperature. When you ask for hot water, your *camerero* dips a can into the lake, and you are served. Breakfast eggs are lowered into this perennial cooker. Farther out, in the wide open spaces of the lake, the water cools to a temperature in which breed in thousands those excellent fish, mojarras. The villagers catch quantities of mojarras every day, not only for their own consumption, but to offer for sale, strung through the gills upon a reed, to the passengers in the north-bound and the south-bound daily trains. As Gage observed 300 years ago, the mojarra is "Much like unto a Mullet, though not altogether so big, and eateth like it." He proceeds to say that in his day there were

"a certain number of Indians appointed, who are to fish for the City" (that is Antigua Guatemala), "and on Wenesdays, Frydays and Saturdays are bound to carry such a quantity to Guatemala of Crabs and Mojarras as the Corregidor and Regisdores, Mayor and Aldermen (who are but eight) shall command weekly to be brought."

In Gage's day the town of Amatitlán was of more importance than it is now. He says that although there were (in 1630) not so many Spaniards as in Petapa, there were more Indians, and the town was almost as rich.

"For the Indians of it get much by the concourse of common people, and the Gentry of Guatemala, who resort thither to certain baths of hot waters, which are judged and approved very wholesome for the body. This Town also getteth much by the salt which here is made, or rather gathered by the lake side, which every morning appeareth like a hoary frost upon the ground, and is taken up and purified by the Indians, and proves very white and good. Besides what they get by the salt, they get also by the Requas of Mules in the valley, and about the country, which are brought to feed upon that salt earth a day, or half a day, until they be ready to burst (the owner paying six pence a day for every mule) and it hath been found by experience that this makes them thrive and grow lusty, and purgeth them better than any drench or blood-letting. They have further great trade in Cotton wool, more abundance of fruits than Petapa, a fairer market-place with two extraordinary great Elm trees, under which the Indians daily meet at evening to buy and sell. The Church of this Town is as fair and beautiful as any about Guatemala, the riches and state whereof hath caused the Dominican Fryers since the year 1635 to

make that place the head and Priory over the other Towns of the valley, and to build there a goodly and sumptuous Cloister, in which in my time there was eight thousand Duckats laid up in a chest, with three locks, for the common expences of the Cloister."

To-day the once busy town has fallen from its former state, and although one may trace the "orderly streets, framed like a Chequer board," set broad and plain upon the "dust and sand," the wealthy Dominican monastery has given up its riches, and this is little but a fishing village, where even the attraction of hot sulphur baths seldom brings the City folk.

The shrewd, observant and not too scrupulous Gage will be quoted more than once again in these pages, so here let us take a brief survey of that worthy's connection with Central America. He was the son of a staunch Catholic family of England, sent for clerical education to Spain, and destined to the Society of Jesus. But for some reason the young man took a dislike to the Jesuits, and, proposing to enter the Dominican Order, incurred the wrath of his father. Shortly after Gage had, about the middle of 1627, received an "angery and harsh letter" from home that threatened disinheritance, the Friar Antonio Calvo visited Jerez in the course of a tour through Andalusian cloisters where he sought volunteers to complete four overseas missions under commission from the Pope: one, of Franciscans, for Yucatan; another, of Mercenarians, for Mexico; and two, of Jesuits and of Dominicans, bound for the Philippines.

Gage was persuaded by a cleric of his acquaintance to join the last-named party, enticed by the promise of luscious lands

"paved with tiles of gold and silver, the stones to be pearls, rubies and diamonds, the trees to be hung with clusters of nutmegs bigger than the clusters of grapes of Canaan, the fields to be planted with sugar-canes which should so sweeten the chocolet that it should far exceed the milk and honey of the Land of Promise,"

and after some jolly feasting the missionaries sailed from Cadiz, for Mexico, half-way house for Manila, on July 2nd.

At the last minute the Governor of Cadiz, under orders to prevent any English from sailing for the Indies, searched the

ship; but Gage hid in a biscuit barrel, his Superior denied his presence, and he sailed safely. There were thirty-three ships, convoyed as far as the Canaries by eight galleons, and thence the travellers saw land no more until August 20th, when they anchored at Guadalupe Island "to wash our foul cloaths and to take in fresh water, whereof we stood in great need." The natives came out in canoes to meet them, exchanging green plantains, turtles and sugar-cane for Spanish knives and "haberdash," and "fawning upon us like Children"; but they were presently roused to anger when indiscreet Jesuits tried to persuade from the island a runaway mulatto whom they found living with the Indians. An attack with poisoned arrows was made on the beach, many Spaniards were wounded and five killed, on the spot, two more dying later.

On September 12th they reached Vera Cruz, the new Viceroy and his party, and the missionaries, receiving a great welcome from the townsfolk; the Prior of the Dominican cloister, a "Gallant and Amorous young Spark," feasted the clerics of his Order, and Gage numbered the inhabitants of the port at three thousand. Thence they travelled on muleback to Mexico City, going by Jalapa, Tlaxcala, and Puebla; and here Gage rested awhile, making notes which furnish him with comments upon the condition of the colonies in Mexico, which, however racy, do not concern us now. What does concern us is that Gage and his Irish friend came to a speedy conclusion that they preferred to stay in Mexico rather than continue their journey to Manila. Disclosing this desire to some friars who were *criollos*, i.e. Mexican-born, they displayed "that inveterate spight and hatred which they bare to such as came from Spain," advised him that the Spanish authorities in Mexico would never permit them to remain, but that

> "they thought we might be entertained in the Province of Guaxaca (Oaxaca), where half the fryers were of Spain and half Criolians and Natives; but in case we should not speed there they would warrant us we should be welcome to the Province of Guatemala,"

and although it troubled Gage to think that Guatemala was 300 leagues away, yet Manila was farther, and there was less hope of ever returning to Christendom. So with three other

missionaries of the same mind Gage set out one night in February from Mexico, just before the fleet was to sail for the Philippines; they had a horse each, and a common purse of twenty ducats, and, as they travelled, took care to avoid towns, instead visiting "from farm to farm out of the highways, where we found good entertainment of those rich farmers and yeomen, who bare such respect unto the priest that truly they thought themselves happy with our company." They passed through Oaxaca, where flourished "six cloisters of Nuns and Fryers, all of them exceeding rich," where Gage was first introduced to the two drinks, chocolate and atol, which he found "nourishing and comforting to the stomach," and where they were told of the rule made by the Spanish justices, that Indians of the highway towns must give passing clerics such horses and provisions as were needed, a note being made in the Town-book, and the Indians later repaid. Thence they continued south-east, to the "plain and champaign country of Tecoantepec" with its "five rich and pleasant towns full of fruits and provision of victual," turned aside at the frontier of Chiapas to avoid the hot Soconusco coast, crossing the mountains, to Chiapa town, where they met another clerical runaway who had preceded them, and who told of the good and kind usage of the Provincial, who "wanted Spanish Fryers to oppose the Criolians and Natives who strove to get a head as they had done in Mexico and Guaxaca." So fair and comfortable were the words of the Provincial, indeed, that although a pretence of punishing the fugitives had to be made in order to appease the incensed authorities of Mexico, the scant meal of bread and water to which they were condemned in public for three days was compensated by merry suppers with the Prior of Chiapa at night. For six months Gage taught Latin grammar to the youths of the town, and then had his wish and was sent to Guatemala.

This journey was made on muleback, and he seems to have crossed into Guatemala by the valley of the Cuilco River, passing by a little town called San Martin, going out of his way to see the celebrated picture of the Virgin at the rich church of Chiantla, and so to Sacapulas, where, descending into a valley beside a "twinkling and wanton river," he found

the Prior of Sacapulas waiting in an arbour with a cup of chocolate—so courteously treated were Friars in that day. From Sacapulas to San Andres, thence across the mountains to Sojabaj, through yet another of the many San Martins in Guatemala, thence to Chimaltenango, where the Friar was a "four-eyed Beast," whom Gage soon left in order to pursue the "plain, broad and sandy way," through the scattered houses of Jocotenango, to the City of Guatemala—La Antigua of to-day.

Here Gage stayed three years, as Reader at the University, with, later, a licence from the Bishop to preach and hear confessions. Then, he says, he began to have doubt concerning the doctrines of Rome, and applied for leave to return to England. He was refused, and then resolved to go outside the city district "to learn some Indian tongue and to preach in some of their towns, where I knew more money might be got to help me home, when the time should come, than if I did continue to live in the Cloister of Guatemala."

At this moment the Prior of Coban in Vera Paz was appealing to the President and Audiencia of Guatemala for help in Christianizing the "Barbarous people" who prevented traffic from passing from Vera Paz to Yucatan; Gage agreed to accompany him upon a mission to these wild Indians, still regarded with dread and still "unbaptized," but a few days' journey showed so clearly the hostile temper of the Indians that they returned to Coban. From here Gage made a trip with the Prior to the Golfo Dulce to buy "wines, oil, iron, cloth, and such things as the cloister wanted," and took ship to Trujillo on the Honduras coast, where they went ashore, travelled to Comayagua, and so back by land routes to Guatemala City. The Provincial now permitted Gage to go to reside for three months with the good old Father, Pedro de Molina, the historian and compiler of Indian vocabularies, and when he had mastered the Poconchi tongue Gage was made cura of the two Indian towns of Mixco and Pinola, ten miles apart. Here Gage began to get rich, for there were monthly incomes from the various Sodalities of the neighbourhood, and the constant offerings to the "Saints statues"; for in Mixco were eighteen images of Saints, and twenty in Pinola,

" which brought unto me upon their day four crowns apiece for Mass and Sermon, and Procession, besides Fowls, Turkeys and Cacao, and the offerings before the Saints, which commonly might be worth at least three Crowns upon every Saints day, which yearly amounted to at least two hundred threescore and six Crowns." There was a string of other items, including special offerings on Holy days and for Lenten confessions, and fees for marriages, christenings and deaths, which brought his total income up to two thousand Spanish crowns, the equivalent, he reckoned, of five hundred pounds of English money. With the Prior of Guatemala he made a bargain: he guaranteed the Prior four hundred and fifty crowns a year, and the Prior sent Gage his wine and clothes. And as a matter of fact Gage made unusually large sums, because " it pleased God to send one of the Plagues of Egypt to that country, which was of locusts," and everywhere there were processions and masses for the averting of the evil; next year, a contagious sickness fell upon the inhabitants, and Gage buried ninety people in Mixco and a hundred in Pinola, getting two crowns for a mass for every victim above eight years of age. Nor did this lessening in the population decrease his takings, for the Lords of the towns, when the epidemic was past, forced into marriage every Indian over twelve years old; eighty couples were thus wed in each town, and Gage received two crowns for every marriage. This was in 1632.

Some time later Gage received from Rome the permission for which he had asked, through a friend, to return to England, and he next applied once more to the Provincial for leave to depart—Mixco having been made, in any case, rather too hot to hold him on account of his zeal in hunting and destroying the images of the Indian gods to which the native folk, some of them rich and influential, still repaired secretly in the mountains. Again the Provincial refused, but softened his denial by sending Gage his patent as Vicar of the Town and Cloister of Amatitlán. Amatitlán was then a rich centre, with more people than Mixco and Pinola together, a church of many saints and images, and with many fraternities and sodalities belonging to it. Also there was a sugar-mill, yielding daily offerings from the blackamoors and Spaniards living in it;

INDIAN GIRLS ON THE PLAZA, SAN CRISTOBAL, GUATEMALA

and under his charge Gage also had the town he calls San Cristobal de Amatitlán, to-day reverted to its old Indian name of Palín, celebrated then and now for delicious pine-apples, made up, Gage remarks, with the sugar from the near-by mill into preserves "the daintiest and most luscious that I ever did eat in that country."

Gage had been five years in Mixco, and he now lived for a year in Amatitlán, until finding the work of superintending the building of the new cloister "wearied much my brain," he exchanged his cure for that of Petapa, also on the edge of Lake Amatitlán, where he remained for another twelve months until a "worm of conscience" troubled him so much that he determined to flee secretly from Guatemala, since the good Provincial would not let him depart openly.

Gage's trouble concerning religious points did not inhibit him from looking carefully to his money-bags. He sent to Pinola for a faithful Negro servant, Miguel Dalva, told him he had to make a secret journey, and through him sold household furniture, mules, etc., finding when all was in order that he possessed about 9,000 pieces of eight. Of this he turned 4,000 into pearls and precious stones, packing the rest into chests and sending them ahead on the road to Nicaragua in charge of a trusty Indian. He bought mules and

"then resolutely, with my good Blackmoor in my company, leaving the key of my chamber in my door, and nothing but old papers within, when all the Indians were fast asleep I bad adieu unto Petapa, and to the whole Vally, and to all my friends throughout America."

He started south on January 7th, 1637; but he was not out of Central America so easily. To the Provincial he sent a letter reminding him of the licence from Rome, and asking him "not to blame nor to seek after me," dating the letter from a point on the road to Mexico, because he really intended to pursue an opposite path.

He rode south by Cerro Redondo, by the Rio de los Esclavos, crossed the border into Salvador to Ahuachapan, avoiding Salvador city because it held Dominicans who might have recognized him, and making for the ferry of the river Lempa, where he found his precious chests. Hence he travelled to San Miguel, took boat to cross the Gulf of Fonseca, and by way

of Realejo, past León, to Granada. From this city he intended to take passage upon one of the yearly fleet of frigates which came up the San Juan River and across the great Lake Nicaragua to Granada, and which, loaded with country produce, sailed down again for Cartagena or Havana, whence Gage hoped to get passage to England without difficulty. But alas!

"Suddenly all was crossed with a strict command from Guatemala that the Frigates should not go out that year, because the President and whole Court was informed for certain that some English or Holland ships were abroad at Sea, and lay about the mouth of the river Desaguadero waiting for the frigates of Granada, . . which made all the Merchants of the Country fear and sweat with a cold sweat, and the President to be careful for the Kings Revenues, less the loss of them should be imputed to his negligence."

Gage thought of a ship he had seen lying at Realejo, bound for Panama: but she had gone. And he thought of Comayagua and Trujillo and the ships of Honduras, but the time for their departure was also past; and at last he, with other passengers also stranded, decided to go by land to Costa Rica, where they were sure to hear of a vessel sailing for Portobello, with provisions of meal and bacon and fowls to sell to the Spanish galleons on their arrival from Europe in June or July.

He was dismayed at the prospect of riding 150 leagues over mountains and through deserts, and feared to miss the "pleasure, variety and dainties of Guatemala and Nicaragua," but nevertheless set out with three Spaniards travelling a road that for three days ran near the margin of the great Lake, finding the towns pleasant, the country shady and everywhere fruits abounding, until, leaving the water and turning "more to the South," they saw "nothing worth committing to posterity, but only mighty woods and trees on the South Sea-side, very fit to make strong ships." Coming at last to Cartago, they found it not so poor as it was reported, but with a number of rich merchants who traded by land and sea with Panama. They heard of ships sailing from the Anzuelos and the Suerre rivers, and chose the journey to the latter, since that route was fairly provided with provisions from

Spaniards' farms; on the way they observed the "rude and bold carriage" of the Indians, very different from the gentle natives of Guatemala and Nicaragua. The third day after their arrival at the port the frigate sailed, the master expecting to reach Portobello in three or four days. But they had not left the channel and sailed the Caribbean for more than sixty miles when they were attacked by two Dutch pirate ships and were forced to surrender. The Captain was a mulatto of Havana, and when he boarded the frigate he would have found "little worth his labour, had it not been for the Indians' offerings I carried, of which I lost that day the worth of 4,000 Patacons or Pieces of Eight in pearls and precious stones, and near 3,000 more in mony."

All the other passengers lost what money they carried, and on the following day the pirates also took the ship's cargo of honey, hides, chickens and bacon; but they gave back the frigate, and thus the victims, stripped and sorrowing, returned to Costa Rica. The Spaniards of the region made a collection for them (Gage had still a little money sewn in his quilt), and they thought now of travelling overland to Panama; but took the advice of friends who advised a journey to Nicoya, where a ship would undoubtedly be found for Panama.

"The way which we travelled from Cartago to Nicoya was very mountainous, hard and unpleasant," complains Gage, "for we met with few estancias of Spaniards and few Indian towns, and those very poor, small, and all of dejected and wretched people. Yet Nicoya is a pretty town, famous for its pita fibre and purple dyes, . . ."

There the Alcalde Mayor entertained the unhappy travellers; what was more, it chanced to be the Lenten season. Gage was able to make some money by hearing confessions, and giving Communion. For the priest of the town had had a quarrel with the Alcalde, had lost two of his fingers in a personal encounter, and was keeping his room. Just before Easter a frigate arrived from Panama, the party once more embarked, and, although delayed by storms and contrary winds that drove them far out of their course, Panama was at last safely reached.

Here Gage stayed two weeks in a Dominican monastery, observing and recording conditions with his accustomed

acumen ; thence crossed the Isthmus, via Venta de Cruzes and the San Lorenzo river, sailed south to Portobello, where the great annual Fair was preparing for the Spanish fleet. From Portobello he found a merchantman to carry him to Cartagena, setting out presently from this port for Havana with the fleet, and, after more adventures, making Cadiz in November, 1637. Here Gage put off his priestly habit, had a suit of clothes made by an English tailor, and got passage for Dover. He had been absent from England for four and twenty years, spoke English with difficulty, but found his relatives without trouble, and set to work to discover what " child's part " of his fortune could be rescued from the estate of his now defunct father.

I would not trust Gage on every matter ; he is anxious to make out a case against the clerics he deserted, and is therefore suspect on certain aspects of church matters ; he is inaccurate, sometimes, in his record of dates and place-names, but the latter failing is comprehensible, since he must have depended upon his memory for much detail, and it is balanced by invaluable information which is, in many cases, as true to-day as when it was written.

CHAPTER VI

ESCUINTLA TO QUEZALTENANGO

Escuintla—Mazatenango—Coffee and the Costa Grande—San Felipe —Road of Quezaltenango—Ancient City of Xelahu—The March of Alvarado.

BELOW Amatitlán the road drops more abruptly, winding, displaying a new picture at every turn, and showing between the mountains sudden glimpses of the brilliant and sparkling blue of the Pacific. Actually, the trail runs over the edge of a gigantic table, broken and piled with volcanic rocks, with tiny fields, the milpas of the Indians, perched high and at incredible angles. When, on a shallow space, the apple-green of a long sugar field, with an old Spanish aqueduct running through, comes into view, it heralds the sensuous warmth of Escuintla.

Escuintla is but 300 feet above sea-level. Its idle streets are full of the volcanic ash of the Pacific, with its queer, unforgettable scent. A strange, dusty, aromatic smell. The air of Escuintla vibrates with heat, violet shadows lie under the ancient, gnarled trees, chickens scratch optimistically in the middle of the road, and a boy sleeps in the shade. Two "hotels" await passengers for lunch, and here you descend to take, all in good time, the daily train of the branch line running north, more or less parallel with the coast.

Once upon a time Escuintla was proud of its importance. It had been a populous Indian centre when Alvarado conquered it "on a night of heavy rain," and it lay on the high road between Guatemala and Honduras when in Spanish colonial days a way was kept open to Nicaragua and Costa Rica. It was then the great market for cochineal and indigo, and later, in republican days, when coffee plantations were

first developed, this was the head-quarters of the coffee traders. To-day the railway transfers coffee sacks and Escuintla is no more than a junction. But it gives access to a few beautiful estates—none more enchanting than feudal " El Salto," with its lovely waterfall and horseshoe of hills sheltering rich sugar fields, its great plantation houses, airy, surrounded with broad verandas, its beautiful woods. I remember a dawn at El Salto when we drank tea upon a veranda, shivering, watching Agua advancing like a purple sail, and Pacaya like a cone of pink ice . . . while the near field was a sparkling sea of emeralds, and every bush flamed with scarlet flowers.

From Escuintla the old " Occidental " line runs north ; it passes Santa Lucia Cozumalhuapa, the site of ancient temples which have served the near-by villagers as a quarry for centuries. Mazatenango is reached before sundown.

A delightful example of the flowery, sunny, little Central American town is this junction of Mazatenango. Its streets are tipped at steep angles, cobbled with enormous stones on which mules pick their disdainful way, and all the houses are coloured gaily. The windows are innocent of glass and long scented streamers of flowers toss in cascades over every peeling wall. At the end of the tilted main street a tremendous flamboyant tree holds a myriad of scarlet petals against the clear blue sky. The patio of the little cheerful hotel is full of crimson hibiscus, the pale stars of jasmine, the heavy heads of trumpet flowers, the blue of plumbago.

The little exterior stairway leading to the upper chambers from the patio is festooned with coralillo vines and the startling sea-blue of tropic convolvulus. A family of parroquets is quarrelling fiercely amongst the leaves, and a spider monkey executes some extraordinary acrobatic turns. In Mazatenango I first saw humming-birds in what seemed like a swarm. The habit of these tiny things is so much more like that of insects than of birds that one regards them as cousins of the stingless bees that compete with them for the honey of the garden. With an impossibly tiny body alone visible as the fast-moving wings held it suspended, the long fine beak was thrust into flower-cups ; when the humming-bird moved, it

darted in a flight so rapid that one's sight could not follow it. There, at one moment, trembling in an iridescent mist before a hibiscus flower, was a flashing green spark: in the next moment the flower hung unvisited while the metallic spark had suddenly appeared before a rosy lily.

Here we are in the coffee country of the "Costa Grande," with the wonderful Vera Paz region as its rival; the bean is of extraordinarily high quality in both cases. The Vera Paz coffee estates are at their finest in the foothills of the Sierra de Chama, Coban is the only big town of the region, and shipments go out via the Cajabon and Polochic rivers and the little railway that runs between Panzos and Pancajche to Lake Izabal and the Golfo Dulce; once upon a time an English company tried to establish a colony in Vera Paz, with a central town, estates, and its own steamship line between Vera Paz and London; but New Liverpool exists no longer.

Over on the Pacific's Costa Grande you will find some beautiful fincas owned by Britons, as, for example, the Venezia estate on which both sugar and coffee are grown. Life here is completely out of the world, the climate brisk and healthy, the scenery dramatic. Outside the patio of Venezia a glorious pink frangipani tree holds scented wax candelabra against a pale green sky, and looming beyond is the jagged, scarred head of Zuñil volcano, a thing of majesty. Forest and woodland, deep lanes, bright and fertile fields surround the estate. The house is built on a level space, on one floor, with thick walls and red tiles underfoot; across the open yard is the sugar-mill where the cane is crushed. In the crushing season the very air is sticky with the sugar juice, the sound of the mill is heard day and night. The boiling vats are filled with raw juice, the furnaces kept red-hot, and presently the brown bricks of sugar (panela), as good as any sweetmeat, begin to fill the storeroom. Then the Indians from near-by villages come to buy, and day by day these dark folk, gentle-mannered, smiling, come in groups to the courtyard. There, very often, the buyers of a village, family groups with women and children, will spend the night, building their fires, cooking their savoury food, and talking softly in their Maya-Quiché speech. They

will bring domestic problems to the head of the estate, accepting decisions as final. I have yet to find the British finquero who did not love the people and the country.

Coffee in Guatemala produced between 1900 and 1924 something like sixty million pounds sterling: with booms and slumps the poor Indian peon has nothing to do, but the owner has seen himself near ruin, in 1882, and then blessed with nearly eighteenpence per pound in 1888. Coffee brought banks and railroads. But until the last seventy miles of the "Northern" line was completed in 1908 (by Sir William van Horne of Canada), the celebrated beans from the Costa Grande, with the town of San Felipe as the centre, went by ox-cart to the little port of Champerico. From here a sailing vessel towing lighters took the cargo to San José, where it was transferred to a Pacific-running steamer, shipped to Panama, across the Panama Railway, and loaded for Europe. The United States offered no market for the fine, high-priced Central American coffee until after 1914, when Europe could not buy and the precious crop went begging at bottom prices.

No part of the foothill country of the Guatemalan west coast grows more exquisite coffee than the section called the "Costa Cuca," between Quezaltenango and the sea, but lying 3,000 to 4,000 feet high. Once upon a time all this tract belonged, as communal lands, to the Indians of San Martin Chile Verde, famous for their fine peppers and for their strong objection to foreigners. Somehow, an acute planter of Los Altos succeeded in persuading a chief to part with a little tract of about 6,000 acres, for which he paid the equivalent of £30, and here he began to grow coffee. An exiled president of Colombia, that land of great coffee-planters, chanced to visit this estate, bought 2,000 undeveloped acres of it from the owner, and laid this out also in coffee. About £100 per *caballeria*, or 100 acres, was paid for this piece of territory, and five years afterwards land in this region brought £1,200 per *caballeria*. No labourers could be obtained at first; the San Martin Indians would turn a hand for nobody.

But at last recruits were brought from beyond Quezaltenango, and a quarter of a million young coffee-trees were planted in the first rainy season. Every scrap of supplies for the farm

TOWN AND VOLCANO OF ZUÑIL, GUATEMALA

HOUSE ON COFFEE ESTATE ON THE COSTA GRANDE, GUATEMALA

was carried from Quezaltenango on the backs of Indians, and when machinery came out from England and was landed at San José, it went up to Guatemala City, then to Quezaltenango, in ox-carts, a double journey of 200 miles, and lastly went down to the Mercedes plantations on Indian shoulders, another thirty-five miles. Actually, in a bee-line, the coast is distant only about forty miles. Two hundred men were occupied for eight weeks on this work of transport, and upon one steep pitch an irreplaceable piece of machinery was dropped and broken. In consequence all the first crop of berries had to be "pulped" (the skin broken, the twin beans released and cleaned) by hand on Indian stone metates.

There was then not so much as a mule-track running directly to the sea at Champerico, so the planters constructed a road, forty miles long; then the carters of Retalhuleu sulked and went on strike, considering themselves cheated out of the route formerly passing by their town, and once more the planters rose to the occasion. They bought carts and 200 oxen from Chiantla, did their own hauling, and broke the strike. Then the machinery houses were burnt down. But when, in 1875, the estate shipped over a million pounds of clean coffee, the Colombian diplomat sold the estate at a fine profit and returned to his country. The next owner, a Costa Rican, made a profit of £60,000 in a year and a half, and also retired.

The Retalhuleu-Champerico railway succeeded that famous high road, was one of the first completed in Guatemala, and is now part of the system of the International Railways of Central America; at Retalhuleu it is linked with the lateral line along the Costa Grande, now extending to the Mexican border. When the Zacapa-Salvador branch is in working order you will be able to take a through ticket from Montreal to the Bay of Fonseca.

From Mazatenango to San Felipe is but a short run, even in the casual train of the branch line. At the town itself it is well not to look too closely except by the glow of sunset or dawn. And here let me say that with regard to the small hotels of the uplands of Central America there are certain items to be taken for granted. First, the probabilities are that

the building is of one floor only, with rooms built round, and opening exclusively upon the patio. Next, that there is no such thing as a glazed window, and that the sole source of light and air is a large wooden double door, with, perhaps, a little shutter let into its surface so that the occupant of the room may look out upon callers without unbarring the door. Third, floor-coverings, if they occur, will probably be strips of native matting, *petates*, which offer hospitable quarters for the extremely agile and numerous, hungry and unslaughterable flea of these regions.

Pretentious hotels in Central America do not give soap to the guest; but every small and remote hostelry provides tiny cakes of something coloured bright pink, or, in the really out-of-the-way places, brown; this latter is made of native herbs and is quite harmless. The food is usually good and respectably cooked, and there are three meals a day; *desayuno*, served from 4 a.m. onwards, coffee and rolls, with perhaps oranges, peeled and presented upon a fork, and eggs; *almuerzo*, served at any time between eleven and one o'clock; and *comida*, from six onwards. The last two meals generally begin with soup and proceed with eggs, two or three kinds of meat, or rather two or three different preparations of beef; and a sweet of sorts, ending with black coffee. Of the Central American coffee habit I am not enamoured. A strong essence is made in quantity, placed in bottles, cold, upon the table. Hot water is brought to the table at the close of the meal, and you mix the strength according to taste.

No attractions exist to keep one up late at night in San Felipe, and as it is necessary to make an early start next morning in order to reach Quezaltenango by noon, you will do well to be abed by nine o'clock, despite the heat. The window-space is filled with a patch of blue velvet sky that never gets quite dark, and all night long the heavy scents of the *tierra caliente*, the hot country, steal in; the air is little cooler when, at half-past three, a yawning, barefoot mozo bangs upon the door. Dressing is a hasty ceremony performed by the light of a home-made candle, and by four o'clock a cup of hot coffee and a scrap of hard bread has been swallowed, and the traveller is

mounted upon one of the sure-footed, sturdy, contentious-eyed mules of Guatemala.

The first time that I made interior journeys in Guatemala I went with a party who took horses; but the horse cannot negotiate a broken barranca, a sheer descent with a slippery stone surface, or climb a mud mountain-side, so well as a mule, and, what is worse, since he is not good for so many miles, it is often necessary to make exchanges. As a result, our troupe became more and more shabby, and we returned to Guatemala city with as sorry a collection of broken-kneed, broken-winded and broken-hearted apologies for horses as could be found in the Americas.

Nor is a good trotting mule a steed to be despised for gait; so, since there are some forty miles of stiff uphill roads between San Felipe and Quezaltenango, take a mule. You can, by the way, make this journey in a four- or six-mule *diligencia*, or a *coche*, but you will be covered with dust, and will see nothing much except the back of your gesticulating driver.

In the soft dark, the road is luckily level, and one rides between thickets of polished coffee-trees, the feathery screen of the *madre de café* rising above them; as the sky suddenly lightens there rises in tremendous grandeur the purple-black barrier of the volcanic range in which Quezaltenango sits. One huge peak detaches itself from the mass, presently showing itself as a great rent and jagged cone upon the left of the road; from enormous fissures in the sides creep clouds of hot steam, rising and hanging in the sky above the broken head. Santa Maria is practically always in eruption of this slow and sullen kind, but now and again she rises in wrath, shakes the towns within her ken, and with fire and ashes destroys plantations and villages; after each of these terrible outbursts the land is endowed with new and extraordinary fertility, and the crops are splendid.

As one follows the winding path in the fresh morning, twisting up about the very foot of the great volcano, soaring to 11,000 feet, there is a magnificent series of scenes. Far below is the turquoise scintillation of the Pacific; beneath the very feet of the untroubled mule is a steaming rivulet that,

issuing from a hot crevice, runs across the rocky path ; up above looms the great fern-clad shoulder, with a sudden awe-inspiring sight of the vicious, enormous rent in the side of the volcano, torn out when, with the true crater choked, internal fires forced their way with a rush of molten lava. This frightful eruption occurred in October, 1902, and when I first saw Santa Maria, eight years later, the great rent was still incandescent, glowing with a lambent apricot-pink, while a long banner of smoke and steam flowed out horizontally across the sky.

When the eruption began in force, ashes were thrown into the Pacific ; Quezaltenango trembled upon its foundations, and many hamlets were overwhelmed ; the sky was darkened for thirty or forty miles about the volcano. The news went quickly by telegraph and runner to Guatemala, and, since half Guatemala City is related to half Quezaltenango and the coffee-growers of the Altos, a wave of anxiety ran through the capital. The telegraph offices were besieged. But just at this time occurred one of the great fiestas in which the President took great pride, and an order went forth that no messages from Quezaltenango were to be distributed.

"My two young sons were in the Altos," a Guatemalteco told me, "and when I got no reply from repeated telegrams, I went to the Government offices. I saw thousands of telegrams, lying upon the floor, that had never been distributed—hopeless confusion. Nothing could be done ! Official orders. . . . That afternoon the first of the three days' celebrations of the Fiesta de Minerva was due. My family did not attend. Nor did half the families of the city. But at night came an order to every house : all citizens were to appear at the functions upon the next day. Nobody dared to refuse. So next day, with garlands and bands, the streets decorated, all the soldiers marching, all the best families of Guatemala paraded in their fine carriages, many of the women in tears, silent, their faces white. The next day, too, these ghastly parades, of haggard and miserable people.

"It was not until the night of the fourth day that we heard that our boys were safe."

This man was lucky—for a thousand people are said to have died in the eruption of Santa Maria in 1902.

As the road turns about the spread skirts of Santa Maria,

ascending, dropping into a ravine, climbing a narrow precipice path, every few yards opens out a new scene; a beautiful faery cascade, hung with ferns and flowers, springs from a tremendous distance above, breaks near your head into a million rills of lace, and runs across your horse's feet to throw itself out of sight into a purple gorge. Groups of deep green trees with enormous trunks climb up the face of dark rocks, at one point, and at the next all the slope is gaunt, devastated, covered with lava and ashes from the volcano.

Rising into brisk air, with a cold bite in the wind despite the brilliant sunshine, a country of vegetation differing from that we left behind at San Felipe has been reached; the range opens to a wide plain, where fields are hedged by a plant showing yellow flowers, or outlined by the blue-green swords of the aloe, each with its one enormous stalk of pale, horizontally branched blossom, lifted against the blue sky. Quezaltenango comes into sight as a white patch at the foot of a mountain mass.

It is a big town, for Central America: widespread, with a great plaza, a great cathedral, a great theatre: but houses have all so suffered from earthquakes that cracks seam their sides and the whole aspect of the place is darkly forlorn; cold winds blow across the bleak upland, and to the traveller with a weak heart the 8,000-foot altitude is trying. The population is dense; all the roads are full of these sturdy Quiché, ruddy-cheeked, full-faced folk, the women with gaily-embroidered bodices and skirts thickly pleated into a belt; probably there are as many people in this region of the Altos nowadays as when Alvarado came here on his way to the interior valleys farther south and overcame the desperate resistance of these dwellers in old Xelahu. From Xelahu the Spanish conqueror marched his armies north-east across the mountains to Ututlán and then southward to Iximché, also overcome after sharp fighting. There he was in the vicinity of that most lovely lake, Atitlán, and to its waters he marched on, with the quickly-attained object of reducing the tribes of the lake border.

There, with a good horse, you can follow; but these high

altitudes, these mountain passes running to 10,000 feet, are cold and inhospitable. Return with me to warmer slopes, and let us approach Lake Atitlán from the south, in a bright week of the dry season.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE QUICHÉ COUNTRY

Going to Atitlán—Rail to Patulul—The Marimba on the Road—San Lucas—Sunset—Alvarado's Conquest of Lake Dwellers—Father Margil—Panajachel—Tzanjuyu—The Popol Vuh—The Quiché Legend—Ututlán and Iximché.

ALL the by-ways of Guatemala are best visited on horseback, but where railways exist one nearly always does use them to save time; thus, when one visits Lake Atitlán, unless one can spend unlimited days upon the road, it is well to take the railway as far as Patulul, almost due south of this beautiful volcano-surrounded water. Patulul is reached in the afternoon; after a six-o'clock meal the night has descended in velvet blackness, and there is no way of getting reasonably warm but by going to bed. Before dawn, you dress by candlelight, swallow a mouthful of hot coffee, and mount an unseen mule, which immediately sets off along the narrow village street, a foot deep in soft, volcanic dust, brushing you against barefoot travellers who come running through the dark, and against the aloe hedge.

I was so sleepy when leaving Patulul that I dozed upon the back of my faithful mule, and into a dream liquid, elfish music presently stole. The guide, suddenly beating our animals to make them get off the highway and on to the little foot-track at the left side, woke me, and I realized that all the length of a village street was filled with a caravan of oxen—endless pairs of oxen, fastened by the heavy wooden yoke—their feet folded under them as they lay in the purple dust. I saw them in glimpses, in flashes from the fires built in the road, where men in charge of the coffee caravan sat huddled under their cloaks.

As my mule, turning from a glowing brazier, pushed closely past the mud walls of the little thatched cottages, he injected us both into the middle of a queer little scene. A wooden cottage stood back a few feet from the road, with an open veranda, nothing but a little platform, in front. Upon this platform stood a large marimba, and, behind it, four Indians, playing a wild tune with their wooden hammers. In the light of the brazier I could see the outline of their long heads, bound with black cloth, their downcast eyes, their dark faces with full, closed lips. They moved their hands and a stream, a flood, a flight of sweet, strong notes ran through the darkness. Immediately behind them the little plank house was closed and still: but a tiny shutter was ajar, and from the crack a slim brown hand was extended, holding a candle wrapped in a rag.

My mule stopped with his nose against the marimba; I stared for a full minute before it occurred to me to turn the beast's head and follow my companions along the road. But while I sat, an intruder from the night, not one of the Indians raised his eyes, the slim hand from the window did not move, the dancing rill of wild notes never halted. All the way along the road this wild music came dancing after. The odd thing about this marimba of Guatemala is that it is not a Central American instrument, although only Central America, and particularly the Guatemala region, plays it. The marimba is African, was brought to the Americas by Negro slaves, and forgotten by them; while, almost alone amongst the people who received it, the Maya-Quiché of Guatemala have adopted and made it their own. Presently the Lake, the lake of serene and heavenly blue, comes in sight. Before noon we reach San Lucas, on the water's edge in a brilliant sun. There is a vast, empty and ancient church, where you will find an extraordinary array of native-carved wooden "saints," discarded, in a shadowed room; there is a street where everything is pale-coloured, the sandy street, the grass-thatched houses, the glimpses of burnt fields, except the shining blue water beyond. There is a hotel of disarming pleasantness, where you are waited upon so sweetly by Teodora, with her hair down her back in two long, purple-ribboned plaits, and where

the black beans and tortillas and eggs *al plato* are of such excellence, that you are not affronted when it is presently suggested that your party should sleep, as all travellers, upon the petate-covered cots ranged conveniently about the four walls of the dining-room. There is no bathroom: you wash, when the mules have finished drinking, in the pila in the courtyard. The sparkling water is a continual fountain, so why not?

When the sun abates something of his intensity, wander about San Lucas, looking in with a smile upon the Indian hut enclosures, with their pretty fences of geranium so trained that it breaks in a screen of blossom, their scores of sedulously-kept coffee-trees, their peaches and oranges, and you will see the Indian wife, wearing her embroidered guipil and 'nagua, kneeling on the sandy ground outside her door as she mashes the soaked maize into paste with her stone roller; she will answer your greeting "A Diós," gently, just as every humble Indian cargador upon the road will reply to your courteous "Adiós, amigo," with "Adiós, patrón." It isn't so usual, upon these roads, to say "Buenos dias," and "Buenos noches."

Climb one of the little hills, look out upon the enchanted waters of Lake Atitlán. The rock on which one stands is of a dark purple-grey, the coffee-trees planted in every inch of soil, in every tiny pocket, are tended like jewels; their berries have the crimson-scarlet glow of the morello cherry. Just below, a cayuca, a dugout, is drawn up on the beach; beyond, the sheet of Atitlán trembles. Far away, it is shut in by purple headlands, by the abrupt peaks of volcanoes, and one can faintly discern the climbing houses of Atitlán town, San Antonio de Atitlán, their feet in the water. Farther to the west are the villages of Tzanjuyu and Panajachel, set each in its green cleft between the close folds of the mountains surrounding the water.

Lake Atitlán is the bluest of all blue things. Its shimmering mirror is of the blue of lapis lazuli, of a newly-opened delphinium, of a crevice in a glacier. But as you look at this breathless blueness, it is flooded with a stream of pale mauve, and this with ribbons of gold, and these again with a suffusing blush of clear pink, blotted out with ribbons of pure green, a wonderful milky jade green. The sun has gone down behind

the volcanoes, the hilly village of Atitlán has turned black with the purple black of the rocks, and nothing is alight and alive but the moving sky and the moving water.

As the sun sinks lower and the afterglow tinges all the still valleys, think of the day when Alvarado came here upon his conquest, after he had reduced Quezaltenango and Iximché and Ututlán, and had received the adhesion of the Kakchiquel tribes (hostile to the Tzutuhil folk of Atitlán), who maliciously urged him to march against the lake dwellers. The Atitlán people remained defiant, and as the Spanish captain approached "no one came out to receive me in peace or otherwise," says his report to Cortés.

"And when I was aware of this I started with thirty horsemen along the edge of the lagoon, and when we came to an inhabited rock, which stood out in the water, we saw a company of men very near us, and I attacked them with the horsemen that were with me, and as we followed in pursuit they got on to a narrow causeway which led to the rock where we could not follow on horseback, so I and my companions dismounted, and almost carried along with the Indians we reached the rock along with them on foot, so that they had no time to break down the bridges, for had they done so we could not have reached them.

"In the meantime many of my men who had been marching behind me came up to us, and we gained possession of the rock, which was thickly inhabited, but all the people threw themselves into the water to swim to another island. And many of them escaped, because my allies, who were bringing three hundred canoes across the lake, did not arrive soon enough. And that afternoon I left the rock with all my men and we camped in a maize field, where we passed the night. And the next day we commended ourselves to God, and set out for the town on ahead of us, which was very strong on account of the many rocks and palisades about it, and we found it deserted; and as they had lost the fortress which they had in the lake they did not dare to face us on land, although a few of them waited for us at the end of the town, but owing to the roughness of the ground, which I have already mentioned, no more people were killed."

The Tzutuhil resistance was at an end. When Alvarado demanded submission to the Spanish crown they replied that their land had never before been broken into nor entered by force of arms, but that "since I had forced an entrance they would be glad to serve his Majesty in any way I might direct them, and soon afterwards they came to place themselves at

DON PEDRO DE ALVARADO, CONQUEROR OF GUATEMALA
From the picture in the Archives of the Indies in Seville

my orders." And off he went to Escuintla and the Pacific coast, to make the first Spanish entrada into Salvador, leaving Atitlán in peace. There is now no town upon the island-rock.

Dwellers near Lake Atitlán will tell you that it has no bottom, and no outlet, but the same story is told of very many lakes in the Americas. Also that there are no fish; there were, formerly, but the Spanish priests discovered that the lake villagers retained their custom of sacrificing children to the water-god. So the good Father Antonio Margil, dead for 200 years but still remembered, threatened that if they made this offering again he would punish them. And returning to find that the people had once more sacrificed a child, he took bell, book and candle and cursed the lake, so that never more should a fish live in its depths.

The only objection to this tale is that there are two kinds of fish swarming in the lake, both very small—a little "triponcito" and a mojarra of the same class as those for which Amatitlán is famous, but never attaining an equal length.

When I went to Atitlán it was impossible to give more than a day to San Lucas; we were headed for Sololá and Ututlán. But we did not care to travel in the little steamer operated by the hotel-keeper at Panajachel, preferring a long cayuca rowed by four Indians. These cheerful men wore curious garments of native weave, embroidered all over with pink and blue flowers; they stood upright, facing forwards, using paddles, with long handles, shaped like the ace of spades. In the morning freshness the lake was a limpid mirror, with a look of purity and soft content, lovely beyond any words. We landed, after a water journey of nearly three hours, at Tzanjuyu, where Indians, clad in black clothes and queer black hats, solemnly raked at beautifully-grown rows of onions and beet, with rills of water rippling between.

Panajachel is cheek by jowl with Tzanjuyu, a delightful single street running uphill, with a cobbled road of all pale colours, and little adobe houses washed with bright blue and pink and green, roofed with fine old red tiles. The low windows guarded with *rejas* are open to cool rooms full of blue shadow, and an Indian girl trots downhill with a big basket on her head, and a fat brown baby slung on her back.

The hotel at Panajachel is built right over the lake; the balcony of your room is hung with ferns and flowers, and you lie at night listening to the soft lapping of the water and the calls of the boatmen. Atitlán village (this, I own, we visited by steamer) is all brown and white in the daytime, terrifically tipping uphill among the enormous boulders, and still the home of swarthy, fine-limbed Tzutuhil clans. By night the thatched houses are almost blotted out, and only faintly can be seen against the deep blue sky the clear-cut cones of the shouldering volcanoes.

From Panajachel we rode all day to Sololá. No by-way, in whatever part of the world, has ever seemed to me to possess the witchery of that road. As one rises, and the path turns and twists, always climbing, the lake is seen again and again, always from some new angle, with some new magic presentment, with a new colour. But chiefly it is of bright, serene, translucent blue, more beautiful by contrast with the abrupt, darkly rugged sides of the surrounding mountains, their menace forgotten when one saw, between them, slips of vivid green and snuggled clusters of thatched Indian houses.

Here and there a crystal waterfall in miniature tinkled and fell to the narrow precipice road; tall canes of begonia, loaded with pink bloom, bent from the bank; a great frangipani tree, its pale bare branches, leafless, held aloft immense candelabras of luminous rosy flowers that sent their perfume flowing along the path. Along the yellow, sunny path came the noiseless feet of the gentle Indians, their dark eyes uplifted beneath the leather strap of their burden, the great cacaste full of red pottery. A pair of brilliant blue jays, friendly, kept us company for mile after mile, darting right under the heads of the horses, playing an endless game. And always below, the Lake of Atitlán, blue with all the blue of Guatemala.

Lake Atitlán is in the very heart of the legendary Guatemala; here were dwelling in fierce opposition the three main tribes of the Maya: the Quiché, the Kakchiquel, and the Tzutuhil, when Alvarado appeared from the Mexican west coast in 1524. It was partly due to the alliance he was able to effect with the Kakchiquel folk that enabled him so swiftly to reduce Guatemala.

The two main tribes of the Quiché and Kakchiquel not only retained very precise and detailed stories of their national origin and deeds, but, some fifteen or twenty years after the Spanish conquest, these old tales were written down. The "Popol Vuh" of the Quiché, and the "Annals" of the Kakchiquel tribes are precious in that they form, with the "Books of Chilan Balam" of the Tutul Xiu family of the Maya of Yucatan, the chief source of our knowledge of the previous history of the various Maya folk. The Inca of Peru had no written history: the great source is the account of old Peruvian story and custom written down by a mixed-blood descendant of the Incas, a youth educated by priests, who actually wrote his book in Spain; while an almost similar piece of work was performed for the Aztecs by Ixtlilxochitl, again a descendant of the old reigning race, but Spanish-educated.

The Guatemalan legends were written earlier, and the names of their transcribers are unknown. In the case of the Popol Vuh, an amazing record, the Maya writer had had some education by the Spanish, for he wrote in European script: but he used the Quiché dialect of Maya, and the internal evidence proves its faithfulness as a word-of-mouth relation. The repetitions, the emphasis, the long recitals of heroic and ancestral names, the startling flashes of light upon Maya ideas, are plainly authentic. And as the story of the Popol Vuh bears straight upon these regions of Tecpan Guatemala and Atitlán, let us spend a few minutes with that record.

Before this rapid summary begins, it may be noted that all the Maya legends, whether "Annals" of the Kakchiquel, the "Books of Chilan Balam" of a Yucatec tribe (the Tutul Xiu), or this history of the Quiché, say that their ancestors came from "Tulan." Perhaps not always the same Tulan; there is one still in existence, a town just north of the Mexican valley, in the present State of Hidalgo.

In the Quiché chronicle, a great part is taken up with mythology, and chiefly with the efforts of the gods to make the Quiché ancestors. Four men were eventually made out of maize, but "these four Quiché ancestors were too perfect to please the gods, being omniscient, so the latter dimmed their intellects, but as some sort of compensation provided them

with wives," says Joyce. These four chiefs set out, Balam Quitzé, Balam Agab, Mahucuta and Iqi Balam, the first three leading their various tribal children; Iqi Balam was childless, and his name disappeared, although he remains formidable for many years yet.

The reason of their migration was their need to "await the dawn"; they went to Tulan-Zuiva, the place of the Seven Ravines, to receive their gods, and there were revealed the deities Tohil, Avilix and Hacavitz. Other men also existed at this time, but apparently quite inferior to the Quiché, although some of these also worshipped Tohil; and joining in the migration were the Rabinal tribe, the Kakchiquel folk, the Tziquinaha, who were the Atitlán people, and the Yaqui, or "sacrificers."

There was at first no fire; then it was given, and hail beat it out, and all the tribes "trembled with cold." Tohil the god eventually gave it again to the Quiché; but the others only received it on the condition that they would be joined to Tohil by "what is under the belt and under the arm-pits," that is, by the heart torn out in sacrifice. They did not know what he meant, but agreed, and were warmed; only the Kakchiquel did not agree, stealing the fire, and were therefore exempt from the sacrificial custom. Then all the nations went up to a high mountain to await the appearance of the sun, for the world was still dark. Before this happened the gods asked to be hidden, and were placed in a great chasm in the forest; and when at last the morning star appeared the gods turned to stone. The Quiché still waited for the dawn, fasting, weeping, and thinking of their gods "down there among the ravines in the forest, in the tall bushes and under the hanging moss, without even a bench for a seat." But the morning star appeared with her "resplendent face" and the tribal leaders burnt their special kinds of incense "while they danced majestically before the rising sun." When the three gods of the Quiché petrified, so did the "first animals" (also to become tribal fetishes). Incense was burnt before these gods in their retreats, and when the blood of birds was shed, the stone spoke.

The Popol Vuh now tells of the withdrawal of the four Quiché

chiefs; "one does not understand clearly where they were," says the recorder. "When they saw the people of the (other) tribes passing by the roads, then they cried from the mountains with the cry of the jackal and the wild cat, with the roaring of the lion and the tiger." Perhaps because the gods wanted blood sacrifices of men; for next we hear of the "sacrificers" offering human blood to the stone, and the stone becoming "no longer stone, but as young people." Then the Quiché began to seize people of the other tribes to offer to Tohil and his two fellow deities, and the country became alarmed by these disappearances. Learning that the gods walked the mountains and came frequently to bathe in a certain brook, they prepared a trap, sending two beautiful maidens to the waterside to wash clothes. They were to gain the love of the gods, and to ask for a gage, a gift with which magic could be made. All happened according to plan; and when the girls asked for the gift, the gods called upon the tribal chiefs, who prepared cunningly three mantles. Balam Quitzé painted a tiger; Balam Agab designed upon the second cloth an eagle; while Mahucuta painted his mantle all over with hornets and bees. When the two girls returned and displayed these presents and the lords, triumphant, put them on their shoulders, the bees and hornets came to life, stung the wearer, and this humiliation "defeated the towns."

Then the exterior tribes decided that they must make war, to seize the powerful Tohil for themselves; but when they were on their way to attack the Quiché mountain fortress they were despoiled in their sleep of their golden mace-handles, their diadems, their neck ornaments; as a crowning insult their eyebrows and beards were shaved off. Meanwhile the Quiché had built palisades, made a number of dummies, looking like men, upon which they placed the ornaments stolen from their enemies, and proceeded to invent the first bombs of military history. They took four enormous calabashes, filled them with hornets and wasps, and at the crucial moment loosed the insects upon the attackers, who dropped their weapons and fled. All these tribes became tributary to the Quiché.

The four tribal hero-chiefs then died. They called together

their descendants. "All four were together; and they sang in the anguish of their hearts, and their hearts cried aloud," while they sang the "song of Qamacu," with which they had greeted the first dawn. "We return to our people," they told their sons. "Already the King of the Deer appears. His sign is in the sky." They disappeared, leaving behind them the "sign of being," in a mysterious bundle called "Veiled Majesty," whose shape could not be perceived, and which was never unwrapped.

Then comes the journey of the heirs of the chiefs, back to "the East" (to such a town as Palenque?) to obtain from their old home the "signs of royalty." They appeared before Nacxit (Quetzalcoatl), and he gives them the

"canopy, the throne, the flutes and other instruments, the magic powders of different colours, perfumes, the insignia of the tiger, the bird and the deer, the shells, pine-knots (cones?) and trumpets, and heron plumes; and the art of painting and writing of Tulan."

Then the glory of the Quiché was enlarged. They triumphed over the other tribes of Guatemala, founded other towns, divided their growing populace, and built cities of stone near their protecting ravines. Quarrels came about; and the revolt of the Ilocab branch. The Quiché capital was now at Ututlán, where they built "twenty-four palaces." All the story now becomes a chant of the power and splendour of the Quiché, as militarily vainglorious as that other little hill-tribe, the Hebrew in the Orient. All the nations gave obeisance, not only on account of the strength of the Quiché in battle, but because of the wonderful magic of the great Gucumatz, fifth king of the Quiché. He was a great wizard:

"On one day in every seven he went up to the sky; on one day in every seven he took the road to Xibalba; on one day in every seven he became a serpent; on one day in every seven he became an eagle; on one day in every seven he became a tiger; and on one day in every seven he became the clotted blood of the sacrifice."

But in the reign of the twelfth king of the Cavek line came the Spaniards, and the Quiché kingdom was no more.

Of the glory of the Maya-Quiché Alvarado thought little;

his report to Cortés is in brief terms. His first encounter with the Quiché was at Zapotitlán ; next, at a mountain pass before reaching their important city of Xelahu, called by the Mexicans Quezaltenango ; and after he had broken this resistance he entered Xelahu to find it deserted. He had given the unhappy Quiché, who fought with all the tenacity of a warrior race, " very severe punishment." One of the four lords of Ututlán had been killed, but they collected the remnants of their army and again desperately and heroically tried to oppose the invaders, using strategy. I quote Maudslay's translation of Alvarado's report to Cortés :

" And they agreed to send and tell us that they wished to be friends, and that again they gave obedience to our Lord the Emperor, so that I should enter the city of Ututlán, where they afterwards brought me, and that when thus encamped they would set fire to the town in the night and burn us all in it, without the possibility of resistance. And in truth their evil plan would have come to pass, but that God our Lord did not see good that these infidels should be victorious over us, for this city is very strong and there are only two ways of entering it, one over thirty steep stone steps, and the other by a causeway made by hand, some part of which was already cut away, so that that night they might finish cutting it, and no horse could then have escaped into the country.

" As the city is very closely built and the streets very narrow we could not have escaped suffocation or falling down headlong in fleeing from the fire. And as we rode up, and I could see how large the fort was, and that within it one could not avail oneself of the horsemen because the streets were so narrow and walled in, I determined at once to clear out of it on to the plain, although the chiefs of the town asked me not to do so, and invited me to seat myself and eat before I departed, so as to gain time to carry out their plans. But I knew the danger in which we were, and sent some men ahead of me to take possession of the causeway and bridge, so that I could get out on to the plain, and the causeway was already in such a condition that one could hardly get over it on horseback, and outside the city were many warriors, and as they saw me pass out on to the plain they retreated somewhat, so that I did not receive much harm from them. Then I concealed my real intentions so that I might capture the chiefs who were taking to flight, and by the cunning with which I approached them, and through the present which I gave them the better to carry out my plan, I took them captive and held them prisoner in my camp."

But even with their chiefs captured, the Quiché did not cease their bold hostility, and Alvarado complains ingenuously

that "on account of the gulleys, some two hundred fathoms deep, one cannot punish these people as they deserve." He proceeds:

"Seeing that by fire and sword I might bring these people to the service of his Majesty, I determined to burn the chiefs, and they themselves said at the time that they wished to be burnt, as appears in their confessions. . . . And as I knew them to have such a bad disposition towards the service of his Majesty, and to ensure the good and peace of this land, I burnt them and sent to burn the town and to destroy it, for it is a very strong and dangerous place, that more resembles a robbers' stronghold than a city."

Alas, poor Quiché! Neither Tohil nor the shade of the wizard King Gucumatz can help you now!

Alvarado then sent to Iximché (Tecpan Guatemala) asking for helpers, and the Kakchiquel sent him four thousand men; with these, and his Spanish horsemen and Mexican soldiers, he overran the whole country, he says. Then the Quiché gave in, sent their submission, and were ordered to return to their towns; this they did, "and at the present time I have them in the same condition as they were formerly, but at the service of his Majesty." He placed two sons of chiefs at the head of Quiché government, and remarks that

"as far as touches the war I have nothing more at present to relate, but that all the prisoners of war were branded and made slaves, of whom I gave his Majesty's fifth to the treasurer Balthasar de Mendoza, which he sold by public auction, so that the payment to his Majesty should be secure."

Alvarado then went on to Iximché, where the Kakchiquel folk were so hospitable that the Spaniards "could not have been better treated in our fathers' houses," and they, having seen him victorious against the redoubtable Quiché, were quite ready to march in his company against those other enemies, the people of Atitlán.

The wrecks of those two upland strongholds, Ututlán and Iximché, may be seen by the traveller who follows the mountain trails of the Quiché country of Guatemala. Beside each ruin is a more modern village, founded after the Spaniards had destroyed the ravine-surrounded fortresses.

Santa Cruz del Quiché sits beside old Ututlán; Tecpan

Guatemala, where Alvarado founded the first City of Santiago, beside Iximché (or Patinamit, according to its Nahuatl name). Each village is little more than a cluster of mud-walled, thatched huts, with thickset, swarthy Indians at the open doors and working in the maize fields. A padre with his Christian church lives in each village and cares for the souls of the native people; but it is only a hundred years ago that the Quiché came down from the Altos to make a protest against new laws, and brought stone gods with them.

Historians have said magnificent things of these old defended towns. Fuentes y Guzman, quoted by numbers of later writers, including the Guatemalan historian Juarros, who ought to have known better, gave a thrilling account of the "many sumptuous buildings" of Ututlán, amongst them a grand seminary where five or six thousand children were educated. The palace of the King competed in splendour with that of the Emperor of Mexico or the Inca of Peru. He speaks of tribunals, lovely gardens, menageries, royal baths, the quarters of an immense harem, and for 72,000 soldiers; and he does not hesitate to give measurements.

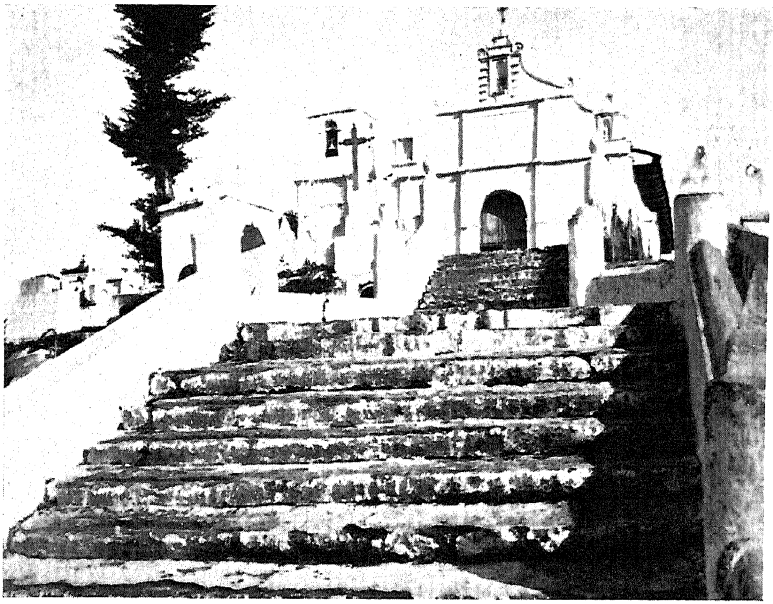
But the scrupulous Maudslay, who visited and measured the sites of both Iximché and Ututlán in 1887, dispels these romantic visions. He found a mound on which once stood the "fortress" to guard the causeway leading to the town, and proceeds:

> "After leaving this hill a walk of about two hundred yards brings one to the edge of the barranca and to the narrow natural causeway by which alone the city or stronghold of Ututlán could be approached. On crossing this narrow bridge one finds oneself on a fairly level space of ground about eighteen acres in extent, with almost precipitous sides, over which one can look down to the bottom of the barranca four hundred feet below."

Upon this space there are mounds, with traces of the foundations of buildings, none of which could have been more than nine feet wide, although the walls may have been built of stone, and coloured. The "body of a leopard, well drawn and painted," was seen on one wall. But Fuentes' palace alone would have taken up "nearly three times the whole space available for building," and one is obliged to admit that this,

and the Iximché defences, were on a small scale. Both were, however, in naturally strong positions—on peninsulas almost encircled by deep gorges, approached only by a natural causeway, and guarded by a number of watch-towers on the mainland.

"None of the sites of these strongholds," says Maudslay, "have yielded any examples of the carved hieroglyphic inscriptions, highly ornamented stone buildings, or elaborately sculptured monolithic monuments which are to be found at Copán, Quiriguá, or Palenque; and it cannot be too strongly insisted on that between the civilization revealed to us by those great ruins and the culture of the Indian tribes conquered by the Spaniards there is a great gap which at present we have no means of bridging."



CHURCH STEPS, COBÁN, GUATEMALA

CYPRESS, PALMS AND CHURCH AT SALAMA, HONDURAS

CHAPTER VIII

THE PETEN REGION

Petén—Stone Temples in the Forest—The Lacandones—Menché—March of Cortés—Hanging of Guatemoc—The Canek—League o Mayapan—Padre Orbita—Padre Avendaño—Ursua the Roadmaker.

NORTH of the green, deep-flowing Sarstoon River and the Sierra de Chama lies the Guatemalan department of Petén. It is shut off from the Caribbean Sea by British Honduras, hedged on the west and north-west by the Mexican states of Chiapas and Tabasco, and north and north-east by Campeche and Yucatan. It has no natural connexion with the rest of Guatemala: the only roads are the rivers, and these are tilted by the hills into two great collecting channels, the great flood of the Usumacinta, running north and west to Campeche Bay, and the east-flowing Old river, with its mouth at the town of Belize in British Honduras. The second of these waterways is the most frequented, for the Peteneros will work for and trade with the chicle and rubber and lumber dealers of the Cayo, while the economic connexion with Guatemala is little greater than it was 400 years ago, and the political yoke is light. The villages that cluster about Lake Petén and the many other smaller lakes where the native folk built their island towns are nominally subdued, nominally good Christians (turning the silver money from Belize into little figurines of saints to hang about their necks), but the region has been visited and explored more carefully by foreign archæologists than by the legal authorities. For here in Petén are numbers of the intriguing Maya ruins. The whole area is dotted with these remains of stone temples, long deserted, long abandoned, for reasons that offer the great puzzle of Central America. Begin-

ning with Copán just across the Honduras border the great Maya series spreads west and north, finding its culmination and its latest calendrical dates in Yucatan, where great populous cities were still flourishing when the Spaniards arrived. Petén lies in the middle of that great pathway of slow migration, and here are such beautiful sites as Menché, on the Usumacinta, bordering on Chiapas; Tikal; Ixkun; Seibal; Naranjo; Piedras Negras; and Uaxactun. Benque Viejo and Santa Rita and the newly-discovered Lubaantun lie within the territory of British Honduras, but they, too, form part of that wonderful series of remains left by the old stone-builders in their northward movement; great people were these, architects and artists, astronomers and creators of a great religious code, masters of an almost perfect calendrical system, who had evolved a method of writing and excellent media for that painted script. After the conquest Spanish religious zeal, in its abhorrence of Maya heathenism, destroyed temples and gods and every scrap of manuscript upon which hands could be laid; thousands of such documents were burnt in public bonfires. And if, for such wanton destruction one's anger is hot against the ruthless destroyer of Maya manuscripts, Bishop Landa of Yucatan, it is almost possible to forgive him because, with that particularity for native vocabularies which the Spanish missionary orders found necessary in order to convey ideas to the Americans, he wrote down words and signs used in Yucatan in the early sixteenth century. These words and signs, after 400 years, have proved the key to part interpretation of the Maya hieroglyphs. Practically, the only key, for the little cane-and-thatch villages of the present inhabitants contain no stone-carvers, no readers of the stone carvings. One might suppose these people utterly indifferent, lacking even respect for the ancient temples, if they showed invariably the spirit of those Santa Rita villagers who, when Gann discovered a brightly tinted frescoed wall, scraped all the paint off for *remedios* (medicine) and ruined his find; but when Maudslay was at Menché in 1882 he found pots of half-burnt copal, recently placed within a temple, apparently by the Lacandon Indians.

Of these Lacandones you will hear many terrible tales in

Guatemala. Cortés heard of them in 1525. They are the wild folk of evil fame, still heathens because, in spite of military raids and missionary efforts, small groups have managed to keep their independence, just as the San Blas people below Panama have kept theirs, although a determined attempt to open the country in 1559 resulted in the destruction of their island stronghold of Puchutla. Remesal tells the story. Nowadays these Lacandones live chiefly in the deeply forested, water-threaded regions between the Cancuen, Chixoy and Lacantun rivers, and the few travellers who have come in contact with them say that they wear a single, home-spun woven and dyed garment, use their bows and stone-tipped arrows with great dexterity, and specialize in making a fermented liquor from honey, of a fascinating flavour, upon which every one gets merry upon festal occasions. Maudslay gave the Lacandones of Menché a good character when, after meeting a family of these untamed folk, he visited their *caribal.* The only track was marked by poles with jaguars' heads stuck on them, and the group of three houses was built two miles from the river bank.

"A woman came out to meet us, and received us most courteously, asking us to rest in a small shed. Her dress was a single sack-like garment similar to that worn by the man whom we had met earlier in the day; her straight black hair fell loose over her shoulders, and round her neck hung strings of brown seeds interspersed with beads and silver coins, which she said were obtained in Tabasco. Two other women came out of their houses to greet us, and told us that all the men were away hunting for wild cacao in the forest."

The houses were very low-built, and a number of savage, howling dogs were tied up in them.

"The clearing round the houses was planted with maize, plantains, chillies, tobacco, gourds, tomatoes, calabash-trees and cotton. We exchanged a little salt for some plantains, yams and tomatoes without any haggling, and the women agreed to make me some totoposte" (dried maize-cakes).

When Maudslay came that way again he found the men at home and as polite as the women, "so pleasant-mannered and free from the dull shyness that characterizes the civilized Indians." He notes that neither men nor women would part

with one of the brown seed necklaces, for any offer; and also observed the "striking likeness which the features of the elder man, who appeared to be the leader of the village, bore to those carved in stone at Palenque and Menché."

Through Petén, from north-west to south-east, by way of Lake Petén, came Cortés upon his terrible journey from Mexico to Honduras in 1524–6. Mexico had been finally conquered, the conqueror confirmed in the favour of King and Pope, but his ranging spirit was uneasy, and he looked about for new conquests, more gold, and the path to the Orient that Philip wanted. To the south, settlements had already been made on both sides of the Panama isthmus, and Pedrarias Dávila was sending his captains up the Pacific on expeditions of discovery and conquest. Gil Gonzalez had entered Costa Rica and Nicaragua in early 1522, and Hernan de Córdoba had founded three towns, Bruselas, León and Granada, in early 1524. The Atlantic coast had been avoided since the disasters to Diego de Nicuesa in 1510, but it lay open to the next explorer. Cortés looked to his laurels. He had sent his close friend Pedro de Alvarado south to the conquest of Guatemala and Salvador in 1523, by the west coast, and at the same time dispatched Cristobal de Olid down the east coast, to the coast touched by Columbus on his last voyage, where a deep bay, "Las Honduras," was known to pilots. But Olid had proved a traitor, and although Cortés promptly sent Francisco de las Casas to punish and supplant him, he made up his mind to go south himself. The captains of Cortés were not anxious to make this journey, but the conquistador insisted, taking with him Bernal Diaz del Castillo, whose account, with that of the Fifth Letter of Cortés, are the sources of first-hand information respecting this terrific expedition. Against all advice, Cortés determined to march by the east coast. He followed a bad route, but it is still a marvel that, with no knowledge of the country and no information but that of a map drawn on a bit of cloth by a native in Coatzacoalcos, he should ever have hit upon the Golfo Dulce. He dragged his army of 400 Spaniards, of whom 130 were horsed, and 3,000 Mexican Indians, from Mexico City to the north of Tehuantepec isthmus, and struck south-east by swamps, rivers, forests and

mountains. He took with him all kinds of foods, including a herd of pigs; musicians and conjurers; and his fine services of gold and silver plate from Mexico, maintaining regal state. He forced to accompany him a number of Aztec chiefs, amongst them the brave Guatemoc, Lord of Tenochtitlan after the death of Montezuma, and his cousin the Lord of Tacuba; and he also took that invaluable counsellor and interpreter, the Indian girl Marina, without whose aid in constantly betraying the Mexicans to the Spaniards the conquest of Mexico might have been impossible. She had already borne children to Cortés, after being the mistress of, and bearing a child to, Puertocarrero, and during this journey Cortés handed her in marriage to a Spanish soldier, Juan Jaramillo; she must have been a physically strong, capable woman, with much natural dignity. I wonder if she really does, as legend says, haunt the lakeside of Mexico, wringing ghostly hands in eternal anguish.

It is not possible to trace the exact route of Cortés; but Maudslay considers that he must have struck into what is now Petén from near Tenosique, after passing within twenty miles of Palenque without hearing anything of it, as either ruin or inhabited city; nor did he hear or see anything of Menché, and it seems that these, with many other fine remains, must have been already deserted and forgotten.

In the "province of Acalá," unidentifiable, but apparently on the east border of Petén, Cortés accused Guatemoc and his cousin Tetepanquetzal of conspiracy, and hanged them. Bernal Diaz says that the death "which they suffered very unjustly was considered wrong by all those who were with us." But there was no rebellion of the weaponless Mexican carriers. From Acalá the expedition passed into the land of the Mazatecas, occupying country east and north of the Yeso lake, and then arrived at the Lake of Petén, where it was received in a friendly manner by the Itza folk, whose stronghold was on the island of Tayasal, now called Flores. Cortés sent presents to the Canek (chief) who then came to the lake's margin "escorted by some thirty men in five or six canoes . . . he seemed much pleased at seeing me, and I received him with a great show of affection," says Cortés in his letter to Philip II. He listened attentively when the Franciscan friars chanted mass

and preached a sermon, and discreetly declared that his desire was "immediately to destroy all his idols"; Cortés was invited to the island city, and was asked for a cross. The Spaniard, seeing the ground fertile, sowed it with the official formula: "I told him about your Majesty's greatness, and how he and all living creatures were the natural vassals and subjects of your Imperial Highness, and bound to your service."

The Canek of Lake Petén temporized with more diplomacy than those chiefs of the country that is now Colombia, who, told by Fernandez de Enciso that the Pope had bestowed all the Americas upon the King of Spain, replied forcibly that "the Pope must have been drunk; and the King was an idiot." To those warriors the name of Spain meant nothing, but to the Canek had come news of the conquest of Tabasco, and he wanted to know if Cortés was really that conqueror, remarking that he, until that day, "had never acknowledged a superior." Cortés assured him, calling upon Marina, who obligingly "enumerated one by one all the lands and provinces that are at present subjected and obedient to your Majesty's imperial rule." The Canek displayed much contentment, says Cortés, on hearing this, and sent for fowls and honey, and gold, and "beads of red shell which they prize very much" (spondulus, as in Zuni?) and in return the Spaniard asked this hundred-per-cent. American to dinner. The Canek knew a great deal more than he admitted at first. When Cortés told him that he was in search of compatriots gone ahead this chief said that he "continually received news of them," and could furnish guides to their settlement. It was near a cacao plantation of his own. This offer was gladly accepted, and after spending a day upon the island in pleasure, the Spaniard set out again, leaving behind his lamed horse.

This horse appears in history again. For in 1618, when friars came into Petén from Merida they were kindly received, and, according to Cogolludo, found upon the island twelve or more temples each of which could contain a thousand persons: in one of these temples was a "great idol in the form of a horse, made of stone and cement. It was seated on the floor of the temple on its haunches with its hind legs bent under it, raising itself on its fore-legs," perhaps in the attitude in which the

horse of Cortés had died. For it had been treated with great reverence, given the name of the Lightning God, "Tzimin Chac," and offered flowers and birds, and so starved to death. But it was a magic beast to the Itza folk, and its statue worshipped. Also, its bones seem to have been kept: for when another missionary priest, Avendaño, was at Tayasal in 1696, they came to a temple and in it "saw, dimly, a box suspended in which we could see, although hastily and indistinctly, a very large leg or thigh bone which appeared to be that of a horse." This was 172 years after the visit of Cortés.

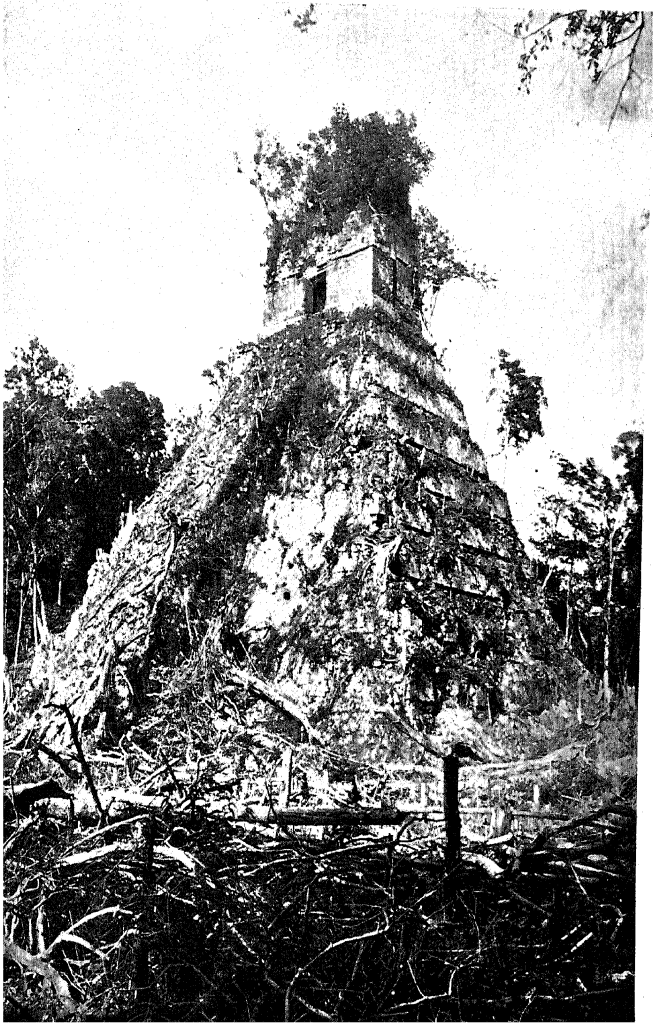
From the lake of Petén the expedition of 1525 made its way south-east, reaching in two days a range of mountains; when they had crossed these stony ridges they were in the territory of the present British Honduras, and passed over three of its most southerly rivers in the hunt for the settlement of Olid. The range, says Bernal Diaz, was not very lofty, but "consisted of stones which cut like knives"; they were very short of food, and would "have been very contented with maize only." The whole journey had in fact been cruelly wearing, and when after Cortés returned to Mexico by sea the rest of the army had to make their way back by land, they were careful to avoid the miseries of Petén; instead they preferred a great journey across from the north coast of Honduras into Salvador, and thence along the Pacific coast by Alvarado's old route by Soconusco.

For nearly 100 years afterwards no Spanish expedition entered Petén, and then, during the seventeenth century, came a number of missionaries who had extremely bad luck; just before the opening of the eighteenth century a determined military expedition was sent at last, but meanwhile this region, a wedge in the heart of the country north of Guatemala, remained shut within its dark forests, the retreat of Maya from Yucatan. Very probably the island city of Tayasal became the guardian of such Maya treasures as escaped Spanish hands after the destruction of the great temples and cities of the Yucatec peninsula.

Lacandones of the woods, Itza of the lake, Mopan and Chol tribes of the east and south were all, like the Quiché and Kak-

chiquel of Guatemala, of Maya stock, speaking variants of the old Maya tongue, as they do still. When the great chiefs of the Maya, with their priests and artisans, made their way to Yucatan and founded splendid cities, there was formed the famous League of Mayapan (about 1000 A.D.) by the three powerful centres of Chichen-Itza, Uxmal and Mayapan. Joyce calculates that this League lasted for 200 years. It was broken by the action of the Lord of Mayapan, who intended to dominate, and who succeeded by calling in Toltec mercenaries who first taught the Maya the use of the bow. The next 250 years formed a period of splendid building; but disintegration slowly resulted from the introduction of the aliens, and the Itza, whose great centre was occupied by the Toltec, went south again, withdrawing to the fastnesses of Petén and setting up Tayasal as their chief stronghold. Here were their ancient kin. When Cortés arrived the Itza from the north must have been settled on the Lake of Petén for less than 100 years. The buildings erected after this return to the tribal home were never, apparently, of the beauty and permanence of the older temples. The palaces of the kings seem to have been large thatched roofs supported on pillars. Not that the place and the region lacked importance; when the Yucatec Maya were once more united by the terrible invasion of the Spaniards, and then, in spite of despairing efforts, were forced to a show of submission, they took all who remained of the learned men, the priests, the chiefs, as well as gods and records, back to the lake stronghold, where, with force of arms and cunning, every weapon of their desperate armament, they tried to keep the intruders out.

It was noted above that missionaries went to the island in 1618, and found the temples of the old gods venerated, and in one of these a statue of the horse of Cortés. Seeing this, one of the priests, Juan de Orbita, was seized with holy fervour, took a mallet, and smashed the image; after which the chances of proselytizing were gone, and the missionaries were firmly bowed out. The time for the Christianizing of the lake-dwellers, so the Chief told the fathers blandly, was not yet come, according to their own prophecies. Another attempt, in 1621, to make converts ended in the tragic death of the



IN THE PETÉN REGION :
RUINED TEMPLE ON PYRAMIDAL BASE, TIKAL, GUATEMALA

missionary priest and his escort. Nothing more was done until the end of the century. Petén remained a closed book.

Nor were conditions much better in Yucatan; the mild Maya folk proved more difficult to subdue, to break, than the warlike Aztecs. Colonies were made right in the north, in the sixteenth century, near the present Merida, and far south at Balcalar, and few could be made permanent. But towards the end of the seventeenth century the bold raids of the European buccaneers became so exasperating that the Spanish authorities in New Spain determined to cut the long-desired road from Campeche to Guatemala, through Yucatan and the Petén. With such a traffic route, the colony would at least be spared attacks upon the Golfo Dulce and other points near the Caribbean and West Indian nests of the robbers.

So when, in 1693, the Governor of Yucatan, Martin Ursua y Arizmendi, offered to make the road, the King was grateful. It was regarded as so serious an undertaking that the Governor was empowered to call upon the Governor of Guatemala, and a triple entry was arranged by way of Vera Paz, Chiapas and Huehuetenango, as well as from Yucatan. The account of the journey written by a priest named Cano shows that the Guatemala expedition was disastrous. Marching towards Petén from Huehuetenango, the party met with the sullen Mopan tribes, kin of the Petén Itza; next, the Itza near the lake made spirited resistance; and the President of the Audiencia, who accompanied the expedition, went back and died. Ursua, working from the north, had better luck, and we may note that on the way he sent a captain to turn out the English logwood cutters of "Zacatone"; the envoy "went with all his men into the pathless jungle, where, though with great risk, he fell upon the enemy from the rear." But quarrels broke out between the missionary leader, Fray Avendaño y Loyola, and Governor Ursua, and the expedition returned. These hot disputes were not uncommon: the priests wanted to conduct expeditions according to the many and repeated edicts of the Spanish kings, which ordered the Spaniards to treat the natives kindly; while the soldiers could see no practical path but that cut with fire and sword.

Next year, Avendaño got permission to try again. He had

the true missionary spirit. He took three friars with him, and passing the road from Yucatan southwards where the Spanish engineers were working, made his way almost due south from Merida to Lake Petén. Received politely by the Itza, to whom he spoke their Maya speech, carefully learnt beforehand, he suggested baptism to the chiefs, and told them that the time for their conversion to Christianity really was due now; they agreed, permitted baptism when they saw its harmless form, and said that if he would come back at the exact time, in four months, when the god Kukulkan should return, they would accept Christianity. But the nobles of the Itza were not so receptive as the Chief, and he had to smuggle Avendaño and his companions away at night, telling them to go due east to avoid a trap. This they did; but they lost their way, wandered for nearly a month, starving and in rags, and were finally rescued by friendly Indians of Chuntuci. Meanwhile the Peteneros had revolted against their lord on account of his friendly attitude to the Spanish priests; but this made no difference to Ursua, who had so pushed forward his road that he was, in March, 1697, only a few miles from the lake stronghold. At the same time the road had been constructed, from the south, from Guatemala to beyond Coban in Vera Paz. Ursua brought his road to the edge of the lake, built boats, and made a determined attack; the Itzas, overwhelmed, took to the water, swam to land, hid in the woods, and never came back. Ursua took possession of the ancient retreat of Tayasal and made a Spanish village of it. Petén, as a Maya stronghold, was no more.

To-day the head of the Department of Petén is the plain-lands town of Sacluk, gathering-place of the rubber collectors when rubber has a price, and of the mahogany cutters and the *chicleros*, collectors of chicle gum. The Jefe Politico of Petén has his dwelling at Sacluk.

CHAPTER IX

EL SALVADOR

Places of Entry into Salvador—The Three Ports—The Lempa—Acajutla—The Launch—Lakes of Salvador—Ilopango and Coatepeque—San Salvador City—A Wedding—A Crater Plantation.

THERE are two main ways into Salvador from Guatemala, by road across the Paz River and past the town of Ahuachapan and so to Sonsonate and Salvador City, or by boat from the Pacific port of San José de Guatemala to Acajutla, and thence by rail. When the branch line so long a-building from Zacapa across the Salvador frontier shall be completed, there will be three routes available.

There are two more southerly ports of Salvador. The first is La Libertad, with a short cut to the capital, and a new railway line; it was, a few years ago, pleasant enough to leave the steamer here and ride horseback to Salvador City, climbing from the green coast up the steep, golden, sandy mountain paths to the 2,000-foot-high shelf where the city stands. And there is La Union, north-west inlet of the famous Fonseca Bay, where the three republics of Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua each own a share.

La Union has a real pier where steamers may lie and passengers disembark without that always rather tiresome necessity of being swung into a little rocking row-boat from the ship's side in an open cage; and since the line passes through the old centre of San Miguel, and Usulutan, to the capital, the coastal part of this little republic, "the Belgium of Central America," is by way of becoming well railroaded. The northern hilly region, with its limit at the frontier with Honduras, is an unknown land. There are none but Indian trails connecting the two republics, except, of course, the highway of

the Lempa river, that beautiful river which has the distinction of being the biggest, in fact, the only considerable river navigable for more than canoes, on all the Pacific coast of Central America.

The Lempa had in Spanish colonial days another quality that rendered it of marked interest: to cross it, either from east or west, was to find sanctuary. This shelter was held so definitely that runaway Gage, fearful as he was of the long arm of his Provincial, felt secure when he reached the Lempa's banks.

"This River of Lempa is held the broadest and biggest in all the jurisdiction belonging to Guatemala; there are constantly two ferry Boats to pass over the Travellers and their Requas of Mules. This river is privileged in this manner, that if a man commit any hainous crime or murther on this side of Guatemala and San Salvador, or on the other side of St. Miguel or Nicaragua, if he can flie to get over this River, he is free as long as he liveth on the other side, and no Justice on that side whither he is escaped can question or trouble him for the murther committed. So likewise for Debts he cannot be arrested."

Gage's route, San Salvador to La Union via San Miguel, remained the chief highway until the middle of the nineteenth century, when the building of the Salvador Railway diverted traffic to Acajutla.

Acajutla is typical of the poorest class of Pacific ports of Central America. Steamers are kept outside so that goods and passengers alike must perforce come ashore in small boats or lighters: and, when you arrive at last on dry land, there is little to reward your perseverance.

Coming from San José de Guatemala, the actual journey by sea takes but a few hours; you stay until the last moment on shore in San José, justly dreading the little steamer's heavings, and reach a point in view of Acajutla in the small hours. Before dawn an apparently frantic steward beats at the cabin door, screaming a demand that you should rise at once and fling yourself on board the lighter wallowing in the oily water below. As a novice, you obey, and presently an open cage swings you, precariously clinging to a central rope, thirty feet downwards, where, if you happen to meet the lighter as it

rises from a sickening swell, good luck lands you on top on a large coloured lady whose lap is already full of parroquets and too-ripe papayas. Gracefully extricating your person, you find a seat upon a leaking petroleum cask or an oozing sack of flour, to wait until, surely within the next few minutes, the launch arrives to pick up the lighter.

But the minutes pass, and there is no launch. Dawn comes fully, and the swell increases. The other passengers, equally chagrined at premature rising, speak plainly of the steamer's misdeeds. Until they become sea-sick, they denounce this as a trick to save passengers' breakfasts. The sun rises, glares upon the dirty, evil-smelling shallows, the wretched beach with its gnarled, naked mangrove roots rising like the black legs of enormous crabs; upon the zopilotes, the carrion vultures, port scavengers; upon the few mournful coco-nuts, stirring their gaunt and shrivelled leaves; upon the rotting wooden huts, the forlorn pier, the dark, oozy swamp. An hour passes, perhaps two. It has occurred to this traveller to sit in a lighter at Acajutla from before six o'clock until nearly nine, overcome towards the end with fear lest the daily train might move off without me.

Nobody makes any adequate complaint, for when at long last the wharf is reached there is not enough spirit among the combined group of passengers to do more than climb into the waiting train, and the only sentiment forcibly expressed is an acute desire to leave the port of Acajutla. To-day one is even denied the small pleasure of seeing, from the sea, the volcano of Izalco throwing up regular jets of smoke and flame. Time was when the captains of ships sailing these waters set their course by the live volcanoes that stood, a barrier of fire, in sight of the Pacific shores.

Once aboard the train, excellently equipped and operated, all is well; one plucks up heart, contemplates such divergences from the main highway to the capital as a day in Sonsonate, a nearer sight of Izalco, a rapid visit to Santa Ana. And then there is Lake Coatepeque.

Sonsonate is a bright little place, a trading centre of old establishment; Izalco's reeking cinder-heap, still hot, is within riding distance. Sant' Ana, reached via Sitió del Niño, is a

delicious, somnolent town with a wide plaza full of flowers and handsome old colonnades that earthquakes have spared. Both places are hot and dusty: and desperately hot, too, in the sun is the capital. From that wet heat of Salvador's towns the lakes offer respite. Salvadoreños frequent two of their lakes: Ilopango, within easy distance of the capital, is edged with doll's-house chalets, and little bathing piers, boasts a "good hotel" with balconies overhanging the water, and a daily steamer. It is in fact the watering-place for half the republic. Acajutla has not the makings of a seaside resort, and the general run of the coast is too swampy and has too evil a repute for malaria; therefore the lakes are the pleasure-grounds, and Ilopango is the nearest, jolliest, and most populous. All the families are friendly, and most of them are related; there is a gay intimacy that perhaps never develops so completely as in lands where formal rules are iron bars. Nothing in the social world is more difficult to penetrate than Spanish family circles, but he who has the *entrée*, permitted to very few foreigners either in Spain itself or in the proudest reserves of Spanish America, finds himself admitted to a free-masonry of easy brotherliness where every one calls every one else by Christian names or familiar diminutives; the *desconfianza* often complained against in exterior relations is banished.

Ilopango is very good fun: but it is big and sophisticated. Better do I like Coatepeque. The lake lies some four miles from the nearest station on the Santa Ana branch of the Salvador railway, and an ox-cart, arrayed with seats for passengers and a beflowered curtain-canopy, meets the train, if you do not care to walk. The creamy-skinned, handsome oxen, looking up from beneath the heavy wooden yoke bound to their heads, sigh resignedly as they pace the dusty, sunlit road; the driver prances beside them, screaming objurgations in liquid Spanish and occasionally prodding the poor beasts with a sharp stick. But their gait never varies. Beside the red, sandy highway runs a thick row of amate trees, their beautiful polished dark-green leaves, widespreading from magnificent branches, throwing violet shade. Near the lake the soil deepens to a lurid purple-red, of something the same

hue as the famous coffee lands of interior São Paulo, far away in Brazil, and, like Paulista waters, in contrast the serene sheet of the lake appears to be extraordinarily blue. Coatepeque shows itself as a bright cup far below, cradled in velvet green hills; the winding, sharply descending road becomes worse, punctuated with bigger stones and deeper ruts, and as the oxen wheeze and moan one gets out to walk. Armfuls of maidenhair ferns are yours for the pulling from the banks, wild red salvias and little pink begonias.

The hotel sits right down by the lakeside, its own little stage for boats and bathing running out from the veranda; it is embowered in tree-ferns and trailing begonias, blue and pink vines, rosy oleanders and feathery mimosa. From a little near-by farm come supplies of eggs and milk, the fresh fish from the lake is delicious, and the coffee tastes as well as essence-coffee can taste. The fact is that all food is good, served on such a veranda hanging over the cool water; and all beds are good in such somnolent air, although mattress and pillow are stuffed with the hard wads of tillandsia that hangs like a grey beard from tree-branches all over the American tropics—Texas and Louisiana call it "Spanish moss." A tin basin and a clay jar (*tinaja*) of lake water, and a home-made chair, complete the furniture of the bedroom, and there is no bath. But there is the lake, and a choice of cold water or of hot, for Santa Ana volcano obligingly heats a stream flowing on the opposite shore.

At night you will see the hotel's fisherman filling a basket for to-morrow's *almuerzo*. Carrying a lantern, he wades along the shallow margin, stooping over each big stone, flicking it over, and rapidly seizing the astonished little fish concealed beneath it. Next morning you may see the same man, gravely seated upon a tiny fixed stool on a primitive raft, his feet dangling in the water, the while he plies a rod and line. This is an all-the-year-round climate, invariably of an agreeable warmth, strongly built houses are not necessary, and most of the food needed to support life can be grown on the spot; thus conditions of living for the peasant class differ little from what they were before the Spanish conquest, and although the fisherman on the lake and his wife preparing food beside the family

hut may have some Spanish blood in them, the daily work and meals of such folk have changed little since 1524. The woman has washed her clothes with a green saponaceous weed from the bush, and spread them on stones to dry in the sun ; over a wood or charcoal fire built in the open she cooks flat tortillas of maize paste, while a black bean stew simmers in a red clay pot ; plantains are baking, in their skins, in the hot ashes at the side. A big jar under the shade of the hut is full of water and maize, steeping for the next operation ; presently the wife will take a handful of the soaked corn, and crush it on the stone metate with the stone roller that her ancestors have bequeathed. High up on the hill-side are rectangular patches of pale green : they are little milpas, sedulously cultivated with no more tools than a bit of stick, just as in pre-Spanish days.

There is an effect of serenity, of continuity, about such a scene that is, to speak truth, in pleasant contrast to the impermanent newness of Salvador City. Placed 2,000 feet up, on the mountain shelf that comes down, hereabouts, to within fifteen or twenty miles of the sea, the capital has been earthquake shaken, moved a few miles, shaken again, rebuilt and patched up again, until there is little remaining that has gracious age or solidity. The houses are painted with blue and pink and white, flowers grow quickly to cover scars, and the air is bright ; but there is a flimsiness about the one-floor buildings, and it is disconcerting to find that the imposing cathedral is for the most part built of corrugated iron—although this detestable material has been given a pleasant coating of plaster and paint.

As soon as one arrives in Salvador its admirable attributes are dinned into one's ears ; it is the most industrious, the most populous, of all Central American countries ; it has the lowest death-rate, it is the cleanest and the most progressive, and it has more schools and technical institutes than its neighbours. The Indians have all been absorbed, and nearly every one wears shoes and stockings. There are more exports and imports, more factories, less illiteracy, and more children are born in wedlock, than is the case next door. This is the home of liberalism, of honest voting, of the first *grito* of Independence. . . .

I wonder why the industry, the shod condition, the virtue of El Salvador leaves one cold; no doubt it is sheer perversity that makes one look for remnants of colonial grace, of Indian lore, and to prefer the outlying regions to the moving-picture houses of the capital. But when one is a trifle oppressed by Salvadoreño rectitude, take heart and remember that life here has not been all legality and progress since independence. There have been incidents that break the monotony. For instance, walk with any informed person to the main plaza of Salvador City, and you may be shown the spot where not so many years ago the fiery General Regalado brought the guns of his command and with a few neatly placed shot blew off a corner of the presidential palace. And then—No, after all, perhaps it is best to leave San Salvador to its own historians. Except to note that the capital takes pride in a preliminary revolution against Spain that occurred in the year 1811. The leading spirit was a native-born priest, Father José Delgado, and the occasion of the movement was the arrival in Salvador City of money and muskets, imported by the Spanish authorities: 200,000 pesos of the one and 3,000 of the other. The padre's party of young men seized the shipment, made a *grito* (literally, "cry," but used as "proclamation") denouncing the iron hand of Spain and declaring the independence of Central America. Troops from Guatemala, however, made short work of the insurrectionists, and although punishment was summary as regards most of the civilians, the priest Delgado was given his liberty, which he proceeded to use in Guatemala by "working indefatigably to influence popular sentiment in the direction of independence."

Salvador is now trying a new experiment in finance. After the end of the European War the Salvador Government found itself pressed by the worries of an empty treasury, for the post-war slump left few markets for Salvador's sugar and coffee; nor did her specialty, balsam from the coastal forests, fare better. A loan was sought. It could be found only in New York, and the bankers' terms included control of the Salvadoreño custom-houses. The Congress at first refused this condition; but ultimately, with interest upon debts to be met with the punctuality upon which the country has

always prided herself, accepted without enthusiasm. Nevertheless the result appears fortunate; the choice of a controller of customs was discreet, and revenues have been increased without an added burden upon the people of Salvador.

I have a delightful memory of a Salvadoreño wedding. It happened that upon one golden afternoon I was invited to the Hospicio where a convent of French nuns had long been established, with the purpose of educating little Salvadoreñas. The walls were very high and very white, and there were cool, peaceful white parlours with sunlit snatches of a beautiful garden entering from under blue-shadowed arches.

An old Sister, with a kind, bleached, much-wrinkled face, from which two extremely bright blue eyes looked out, took me to a large airy room where thirty girls sat sewing, their needles flying to and fro, working fine threads and coloured silks into dainty garments. Drawn work and lovely embroidery was worked to the order of happy and well-to-do women outside the convent, by these numbers of little brown hands. A row of sleek black heads was bent over the piles of snowy fabric, and now and again a pair of handsome eyes was swiftly lifted; here and there was a peachy young cheek, the pretty curves of developing girlhood. It was as though all this flood of youth were impossibly penned up in the quiet atmosphere by the guarding walls and the gentle guarding eyes of the good Sisters.

Would I care to see the last box, just being packed, of the trousseau of a Salvador maiden . . . "her father is not rich, but a good doctor, much respected." The wedding was to take place to-morrow . . . everything had been made here. Ildefonsa, there by the window, had just finished the last work upon the veil. Yes, there it lay, a miracle of lacy foam, upon the bare wooden table before a big, swarthy, plump and very good-looking girl who sat with a shaft of light from the grilled window descending upon her round head. I looked at the work, made some admiring comment, to which Ildefonsa listened with a modest smile and her ardent eyes raised but once.

"A lovely girl," I murmured indiscreetly to the white-coifed Sister, and she gently rebuked me.

"She is a good and obedient child," she preferred to think. "Alas, like so many others, she has no father. And the mother . . ." A pause condemned that absent lady. "It is well that she does not often care to come here. Ildefonsa is a serious child."

I looked back from the door of the sewing-room, and at that moment something passed like a flame through the open bars of the grille and fluttered down upon the head of Ildefonsa: a huge red hibiscus flower. The girl glanced at the door, met observant eyes, and at once, without the least change upon her apricot face, picked up the intruding, tell-tale flower and brought it to the old Sister as she stood on the threshold of the bright, sun-drenched patio.

"Without doubt, it is once more some foolish boy." She seemed to offer up that foolishness to the Sister, noiselessly retreating to her seat as soon as the flower was taken, with eyes of an impossible innocence, and then, at the Sister's command, brought the filmy veil into the white, cool parlour and laid it with the other delicious adornments in a great box lined with white satin. Exotic flower herself tossed casually into life, child of tropic love, schooled and most extraordinarily submissive, what were weddings to her?

Next morning I happened to glance for a moment into one of the open, spacious churches with their dim and peaceful retreat from the burning street, their gay and kindly saints and flower-decked altars. It was draped from top to bottom with pale blue and white hangings; in front of the chancel steps were two *prie-Dieu* chairs with white satin cushions neatly spread. A wedding, plainly: but I thought no more of it until, half an hour later, happening to pass that same church again, I met the wedding party on the steps.

First came a small boy, his thin brown legs emerging from a painfully new white cotton suit; he carried a large bunch of carnations which constantly shed its flowers, and which he as constantly retrieved, fighting valiantly the while with an Indian maid-servant. She, barefooted, her black hair sleeked with oil, wore over her shoulders one of those glorious *mantos de Manila*, embroidered magnificently with all the colours of the rainbow, that have lately become so fashionable in

London and Paris. There was a time, not so long ago, when one could pick them up from the pawnshops of Salvador and Nicaragua for five or ten American dollars.

Next came the bride and bridegroom. The girl's face was powdered to an opaque chalk-white, and she smiled a fixed smile that never faltered. She wore conventional white satin, and from her head hung the exquisite veil I had seen at the convent. The proud husband looked agonized in his long black tail-coat, and a terrifically shiny tall hat; his moustache was fiercely waxed, and high above the little bride's head he carried a beflounced white sunshade. Following them came other couples, each lady with her cavalier holding the necessary sunshade—for by this time it was past ten o'clock in the morning, and the sun beat mercilessly upon the cement paths of Salvador City. There were some sixteen of these pairs; and behind them marched twenty-two couples of men, all elaborately dressed, black coated, black hatted. Some of the women wore chiffon dresses with splendid hats, others had the *reboso* thrown about their heads; but the men were all formal, unsmiling, imbued with the correct ceremonial spirit. They walked down three streets, past the main plaza, along an avenue, all in the broiling sun, with the courteous crowd keeping pace on the other side of the road and never making a sound, until, after a promenade of at least a mile, the party disappeared inside a one-story Salvadoreño villa delightfully built, painted with pink and blue, and decorated with stucco wreaths until it looked like a gigantic cake made for Christmas.

Santa Tecla, often marked upon maps as "New San Salvador," is reached by train from the capital, a bright little, low-built town, hot with the perennial heat of the coast. For none of the towns of Salvador were built far away from the Pacific; most of them are seated, like the chief city, upon the ledge of the coastal range, but this altitude is not sufficient to counteract the year-round high temperature.

Apart from the lake watering-places, there is but one place in Salvador where I ever felt reasonably cool, and that was at a beautiful estate, a perfect gem, a pearl among Central

American estates, charming as are so many of them. This wonderful place occupies the floor of an extinct crater; the area is about two miles across, and the only entry is by a gap in the crater wall. Large and stout gates are fixed in this gap, and here is an impregnable land, an entire self-contained country.

For it grows nearly everything you could think of or need. On the steep-sloping inner walls of the crater, green and wooded, coffee is planted, and all kinds of European fruits—strawberries, and orchards of peaches, plums, as well as oranges and limes. On the floor of the old crater are sugar-fields and a well-equipped mill; and there are sheep, horses, and cows on the estate. The dwelling-house, furnished with European furniture and fabrics, is surrounded with bright gardens, and there are big bathing tanks, and a great pool where different kinds of water-birds are encouraged to breed.

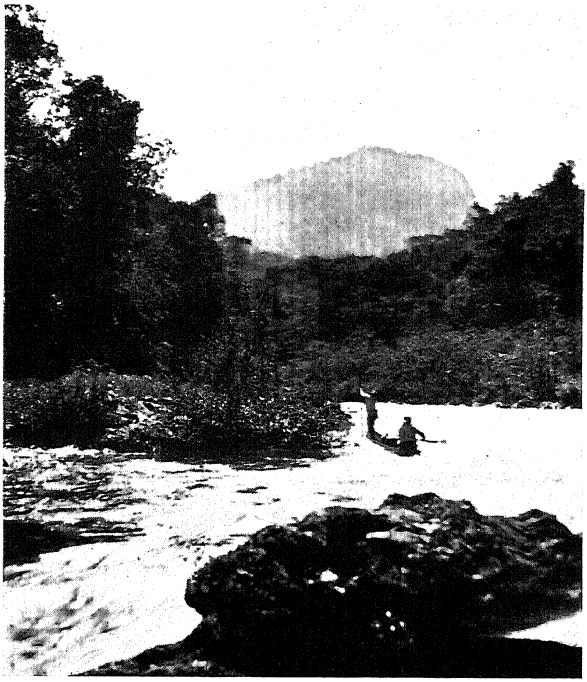
CHAPTER X

ALVARADO'S CONQUEST OF SALVADOR

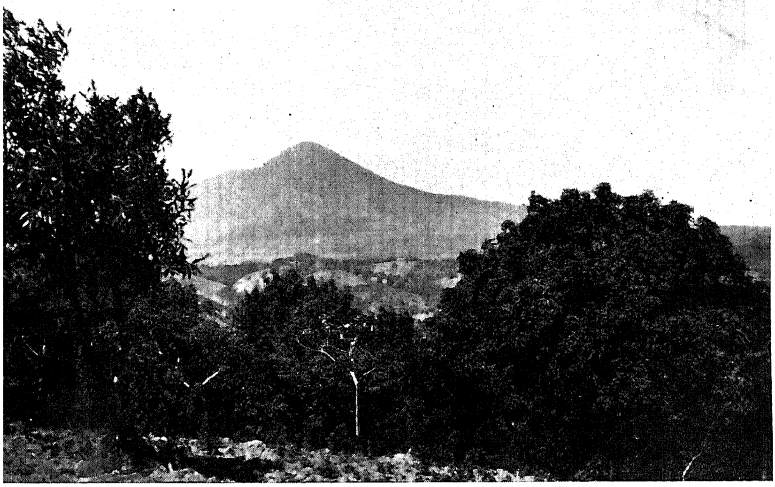
The Entry of Pedro de Alvarado—Letter to Cortés—Cuscatlán.

THE conquest of Salvador, or rather of certain coast centres of the native tribes, was initiated by Pedro de Alvarado, in 1524, after he had reduced the fortress towns of the Quichés in the Altos of Guatemala, raided Escuintla, and struck south hunting for rich cities. Since he left Ututlán in April, and returned to Guatemala in July, the whole of his journey, with its forced marches in an unknown and inhospitable country, was made during the rainy season. The only record of this pioneer journey, full of interest, is the brief and somewhat staccato report written by Alvarado to Cortés on July 28th, 1524.

From Escuintla he made his way near the coast, finding paths south of the mountains, through a town which still bears its name of 400 years ago, Tajisco. The unhappy native tribes of the coast had already received news of the advance of the Spaniards, of their terrible weapons of attack, their horses and steel swords; and in consequence they temporized, perhaps hoping to avert the worst. More than once Alvarado received envoys who "gave themselves as vassals of His Majesty," and yet, oddly enough to the conquistador's mind, it happened at Atiepar and many other settlements that "without any explanation they left the town and hid themselves and we could not find anyone." The very next town "received me in peace and decamped an hour afterwards." What is more, whenever they had the chance, these remarkable people, who could not understand the blessings of becoming the lieges of the King of Spain, set upon any unwary rearguard, and, especially recovering their boldness when they



POYAS HILLS AND PLANTAIN RIVER, HONDURAS



ON THE NEW ROAD BETWEEN SALVADOR AND GUATEMALA

had to deal with Indian carriers in the service of the Spaniards, seized baggage containing clothes and tore it into scraps, " each man carrying his trophy of it in battle."

Pedro de Alvarado sent messengers up into the hills to threaten the runaways that if they did not come he would make slaves of them : " and with all this they did not wish to come," nor did the messengers return. He shakes his head over such obstinacy, but nevertheless was quite ready to receive kindly a new mission of natives from a place which he spelt as the familiar Spanish word " Paz " (calling the tribe Pasaco) ; Alvarado gave them presents " and begged them that they should behave themselves," and yet, alas ! when he reached the borders of the town next day he found " the roads blocked and many arrows fixed."

" And when I had entered the town I saw that some Indians were quartering a dog as if for sacrifice ; and they gave a cry throughout the town and we saw a great multitude of people, and we attacked them, breaking in among them until we drove them from the town, and we followed their retreat as far as it was possible,"

proceeds Alvarado's report to Cortés. If " Paz " gave its name to the river on the frontier of Salvador with Guatemala, still called the Rio de la Paz, the conqueror was now inside the region that was the province of El Salvador in Spanish colonial days, afterwards part of the Central Confederation, and later a republic.

At " Mopicalco " and at " Acatepeque " he found none but abandoned houses, but at " Acaxual " (Acajutla ?) a desperate stand was made against the invading army.

" When I had arrived within half a league of this town I saw the fields full of warriors, with their plumes and devices on their weapons of offence and defence, in the middle of a plain where they were waiting for me ; and I went within a bow-shot of them and here I remained quietly until all my force had arrived. And as soon as they were formed up I advanced to within half a bow-shot of the warriors, and there was no movement nor alteration in them that I could see, and it appeared to me that they were somewhat near a wood where they could shelter from me. And I ordered my forces, which were a hundred horse and a hundred and fifty foot and five or six thousand Indian allies, to retreat, and thus we drew back and I remained in the rearguard

directing the retreat; so great was their pleasure when they saw me withdraw that they came following me right up to the horses' necks, the arrows that they shot flying as far as the advance guard; and all this happened in a plain where there was no cover for us or for them. When I had drawn back a quarter of a league to a position where every one had to fight their best and not run away, I turned on them with all my forces and routed them. And so great was the destruction we made among them that in a little while there was no one left alive of all those who had come out; because they were so heavily equipped that anyone who fell could not get up. Their covering is a corselet of three fingers' thickness of cotton coming down to the feet, and they have arrows, and long spears; and in falling the foot soldiers were all killed."

The heavy garment used in action by the Indians (Pipiles, here, a Nahuatl-speaking folk), must surely have been acutely uncomfortable when worn in the sweltering coastal lowlands; but it was of course invented as a defence against arrows. It was useless against the matchlocks of the Europeans, clumsy as these weapons were, but it served its purpose so well as regards warding off native attacks that the Spaniards had long ago, in Mexico, learnt the wisdom of casting off their intolerably weighty armour and assuming a coat quilted thickly with cotton.

In this fight Alvarado was lamed by an arrow, and says that thenceforth the wounded leg was "a good four fingers' breadth shorter than the other"; so the Spanish force remained here five days to recruit. But when they moved on to "Tacuxcalco" the courageous tribes again gave battle. Pedro de Alvarado says that he got up on a hill in order to see what was passing clearly when the encounter took place, sending his brother Gonzalo to the right with thirty horse, his brother Gomez to the left with twenty horse, while Jorge de Alvarado charged with all the rest of the Spanish forces.

"To see them from a distance was terrifying," says the letter, "because most of them had spears of thirty palms' length, all raised up"; but, as usual, when the Spanish horsemen charged they were able to put the Indians to rout, following them for three miles with "great slaughter and punishment." Alvarado says that when the people of other towns saw what had happened they, too, abandoned their

dwellings. When he moved on to "Miagonaclan" the inhabitants "took to the woods like the others"; and when he marched upon the next settlement, "Atehuan," he received messages from the city of "Cuxcaclan" (Cuscatlán), whose chiefs offered obedience to the King of Spain and said they wished to be peaceful. Alvarado says that he hoped they "would not lie like the others," and went on to the ancient city, but, although a few Indians received him, nearly all the town was deserted, and presently the Spaniards found themselves alone, every native of the place retreating to the mountains. Nor did they accept kindly the summons Alvarado now sent them, telling them that he did not wish to make war, "but to bring them to the service of God our Lord and of His Majesty; they sent to me to say that they did not acknowledge anyone, that they would not come, and that if anyone wanted them, they were waiting, armed."

Alvarado then threatened them with slavery and branding, sent Spaniards into the mountains after them and succeeded in capturing a Chief, and dispatched him to his people as an envoy with denunciations of the recalcitrant tribes as rebels and traitors, subject to execution, and threats of branding and slavery for all who should be taken in war. But, during the seventeen days he stayed in Cuscatlán, he says that "neither by the expeditions I ordered to be made, nor by the messengers I sent, could I attract them" and so, with the rains heavy upon them, the Spaniards determined to go back to the first City of Santiago. When the rains are over he says that he is going in quest of "Tepalan," a city which has "large buildings of stone with flat roofs," and of other populous centres; messengers from four or five towns have already come to offer obedience, and one of these is said to have 30,000 inhabitants; Alvarado says he thinks it is true, for this is the most populous of all regions Cortés has yet controlled. Saying this, Alvarado remembered all the great hosts of Mexico; if he was right, Guatemala rapidly lost that dense population.

Exasperatingly, Alvarado omits any description of the towns and the manner of life of the native folk of Salvador as he saw it when, for the first time in history, white Europeans

appeared upon the Pacific Coast of Central America: but he was greatly impressed by the live volcanoes of the southerly regions.

"In this country we have found a mountain range where there is a volcano which is the most terrifying thing that I have seen, that throws from its mouth stones as large as a house, burning with flames, and when they fall they are broken to pieces and cover all the range with fire. Sixty leagues farther on we saw another very astonishing volcano which gave out smoke that rose to the sky, the body of smoke being half a league wide. No one will drink water from the rivers that come down here, because it is known to be sulphurous; and notably there runs hence a copious river so hot that several people of my company who entered it could not cross; and looking for a ford they found a cold river joining this one, and where they joined was a temperate ford where they were able to pass over."

And having said this, the conqueror of Guatemala and Salvador remarks that "there is nothing more about these parts to make known to Your Honour." But he complains of the "little profit secured so far" by himself and "those hidalgos who travel in my company." However, he must have thought that the Salvador country had possibilities, for in 1525 he sent his brother Jorge back to Cuscatlán, and close at hand was then founded the first City of San Salvador.

Archæologically, Salvador is not spectacular, and has until recently received little attention; but there is certainly work to be done on the site of old Cuscutlán; and in the San Miguel region; and in the almost unvisited northern area adjoining Honduras. Not only does investigation of Salvador's old culture await the expert, but so does the detailed colonial history of the country; some day, perhaps, a devoted student of Salvador, and another of Honduras, will do the necessary digging in the archives of Spain that will yield such results as the work of the Central American historians of Guatemala, Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

There is a small museum in Salvador city; I have a beautiful little clay head, of fine paste excellently fired, typically Maya, which was purchased from that collection some years ago.

CHAPTER XI

HONDURAS: THE PACIFIC REGION

Fonseca Bay—Amapala—San Lorenzo and the Road to Tegucigalpa —The Old Mining Region—Comayagua—Central American Federation —Debt—Revolution.

IN Fonseca Bay three countries meet. Here is Salvador, with her bright little port of La Union, giving access to the capital via the old and prosperous San Miguel: to the south lies Nicaragua, no longer sending the pre-railway ferry across from Zempisque at the mouth of the Estero Real, and in the middle is the wedge of Honduras, with her two islands of Tigre and Manguera, where, in the days of Dampier the buccaneer (here in the *Bachelor's Delight* in 1685), were two large Indian towns. Tiger Island is a beautifully green hill (a former President, manning guns on the top, defied the powers here for six weeks) with the pretty port of Amapala snuggled on the landward side. Amapala was created by the enterprise of an Italian in 1846; and it is a busy little town, although you may not think so if you walk its bleached, sun-drenched streets at the hour of siesta, or observed its shuttered windows during the nightly *chubasco* (gale) that lashes Fonseca Bay. Here is the great congregation of foreign merchants, shipping out country produce from Tegucigalpa and intermediate points, and importing such goods as Honduras cannot make for herself. The houses are built of 'dobe, low, whitewashed, roofed with big curved red tiles; and the flamboyant trees that shade the tipping paths carry, pendant from their horizontally-spread branches, the longest bean-pods that I have ever seen. And the toughest. I broke one, idly, from a wayside tree, carried it to the steamer, threw it presently into a trunk, with clothes and books, and after an interval of ten years

and journeys half across the world, tossed about to take its chance, that pod is just the same—three-quarters of a yard long, dark brown, tough as leather, apparently imperishable.

From Amapala one begins the journey to Tegucigalpa; a delightful journey that makes one hope that there will never be a railway here. First, a thirty-mile-long water journey in steamer or motor-boat up the San Lorenzo opening; the estero is shaded with fine trees between whose leaves one catches glimpses of distant mountains, of the true Central American bright green, pale blue and dark purple. At the head of navigation is little San Lorenzo, where a motor-car waits to carry you eighty-four miles over hill and dale to Tegucigalpa. Honduras boasts of this road as the best in Central America. It is just what a highway ought to be, for it has an extremely good surface and it presents travellers with a series of gorgeous views of the country. Originally built for carriages in 1888, by that energetic President of Honduras, General Bogran, the road has been maintained in first-class condition for the new order of travellers using motors. Running almost due north, the road is presently bordered on the east by the much admired region of El Paraiso, whose wonders of fertility, climate, variety and beauty are, I regret to say, unknown to this wayfarer but from the cushioned seat of a car. There is a fine tumble of green hills and pretty valleys, clothed in broad patches with pines or small oaks, and one may be certain that lying as it does amongst heights giving on to the balmy Pacific slope, this Paradise is really charming, lacking only angels. But it is as empty as the rest of Honduras.

About fifteen miles from the capital our road crosses the bridge called " El Ingles," spanning a deep ravine where ferns are rampant; Tegucigalpa comes into sight, a white city spread in an upland valley-plain, enclosed by wooded hills and standing over 3,000 feet above sea-level.

The young waters of the Choluteca River, fresh from a mountain birthplace, brawl over pale stones, spreading into a wide and shallow stream crossed by a fine arched bridge. I believe that this is not the original old Spanish colonial bridge, but it is solid and decorative enough, and, with the bright stream and fresh green hills, lends Tegucigalpa its chief charm.

The city dates from about 1650, owing its rise not to deliberate choice for strategic regions, like Comayagua, founded as a point upon the line of high-road communication from Guatemala to the more southerly provinces, but because mines of silver and gold were found in the surrounding hills and valleys. The richest places of the Olancho valley had been exhausted, and Tegucigalpa, site of an Indian village, became the centre of new mining enterprise, the Jesuits as usual taking a leading part. One still hears in this region the most wonderful stories of nuggets weighing a pound, of sands in old river-beds where one could wash out a fortune in a few days, and silver veins so thick that the rocky hill-sides shone in the sun; and there is no doubt that at one time Tegucigalpa was rich. The streets are paved with solid stone slabs, the old Spanish houses display balconies covered with handsome iron grilles, the rooms and patios are cool and spacious. The cathedral, the old churches, to-day shabby and poorly kept, but of generous design, were splendid in the days when this was the Potosi of Central America; there was and is plenty of food, cattle, fruit, maize and beans, as the public market testifies; but the entry of such luxuries as wines and fine silks that used to come here from Belize, once the great shipping point between Havana and this region, is sadly diminished.

Tegucigalpa dates its decay from Independence from Spain, a hundred years ago, the transference of the seat of government to this city, by the republican administration about the middle of last century, helping to preserve its dignity but without restoring its ancient splendour. For when Spanish rule was overthrown many wealthy Spanish families went away to Spain; the Jesuits, expelled from their ancient properties, are said to have hidden the sites of many mines; and in such as remained open the freed Negroes refused to work. Several enterprising foreigners sought, and worked more or less satisfactorily, veins of gold and silver during last century, and the biggest group, of the Rosario mines, is now in the hands of a New York company.

Tegucigalpa has a twin-towered cathedral; a low-built University at the side of a tree-shaded plaza; a number of modern factories making shoes, hats, soap, candles and so

on; there is a quite pleasant hotel, with electric light; and in the afternoon you will find it pleasant to cross the river and ride into the straggling, sunny little suburb of Comayaguela.

Twenty miles distant by road are the Rosario silver mines, American-operated for the last forty years, during which time ore worth something like £5,000,000 has been yielded. Before new machinery was brought in, Hondurans were still getting out the metal, and making charcoal for sale in near-by villages, by an ancient and simple method. When a good vein in a hill was found, the face of the rock was cleared, and closely piled with pine-logs tightly packed with grass sods. A fire was started and allowed to smoulder for a minimum of ten days, and sometimes for three weeks, while the rock face disintegrated and the silver obligingly ran out into a channel cut in the soil below the fire. When the fire went out, here was a pool of silver and a heap of charcoal. The rock, denuded of its ore, was roasted so thoroughly that it could be beaten down until the vein was again exposed. You may still see this system followed in the interior regions where a family or a small group has discovered or reopened a vein of silver. And if your curiosity extends to methods of alluvial gold recovery, this too may be seen in Honduras, carried out by scores of independent gold-hunters in hundreds of places, but chiefly along the courses of the more smoothly-flowing rivers of the Atlantic slope.

The favourite kind of river is wide and gentle, with bends and shallows in its course, where the shining grains accumulate and are readily scooped up and extracted. Here, for instance, is an elbow, sharp at the inner angle, where the water dashes swiftly against a high bank, spreading wide and peaceful over a sandy bottom on the opposite side.

Several square yards of these convenient shallows at the bend have been fenced off with stakes interwoven with palm leaves to divert the stream, and here a whole family is working, barefoot, with clothes rolled up and big straw hats shading the bent heads from scorching sunlight. A wattled hut at the top of the bank provides shelter for the night, and an armful of sticks for a fire is always to be found in the bush near by.

The method is as simple and as old as that of making maize

tortillas. The only implements needed are some sort of a shovel for scooping up the sands, and a big, shallow, wooden bowl called a *batea*. The sands, with plenty of water, are set in motion in the batea with a dexterous twist of the arms, and kept circling and slightly tilted while the water washes away loose, light dirt; with more water added, the sands are gradually reduced until at last there is nothing at the bottom but some comparatively heavy pebbles and a tiny pile of gold dust. The pebbles are picked out, the gold tipped into a big quill—frequently from a heron's wing. Repeat this process until the quill is full, and the father of the family has enough cash to exchange in the nearest village for a few yards of cotton cloth, some beans and corn, perhaps a scrap of meat and certainly a few strong drinks of sugar-cane spirit.

I may add here that I have never seen a gold-washing party that was not in rags, or the owner of a *pulperia* (drink shop) who was not apparently well-to-do. Nevertheless, a few respectable fortunes have been made by the proprietors of river-areas where the placers have proved good, even within the last few years. Considering that gold has been searched for in Central American river-sands for a long unknown period by the indigenous folk, and with extreme assiduity by white men and their Negro servants for the last 400 years, it is extraordinary that any gold should be to-day discoverable. It is, no doubt, still being washed down from its mountain birthplaces, regions so remote and so secretly hidden by jungle and volcanic ash, or placed in regions so difficult of access, that generally speaking it is not worth while to risk the loss of the large sums needed in order to get machinery to these heights. The man working a placer belt has, at least, nothing to lose but his time. The great ancient gold-working region is Olancho, with the Patuca river and its branches as perennial sources of precious grains.

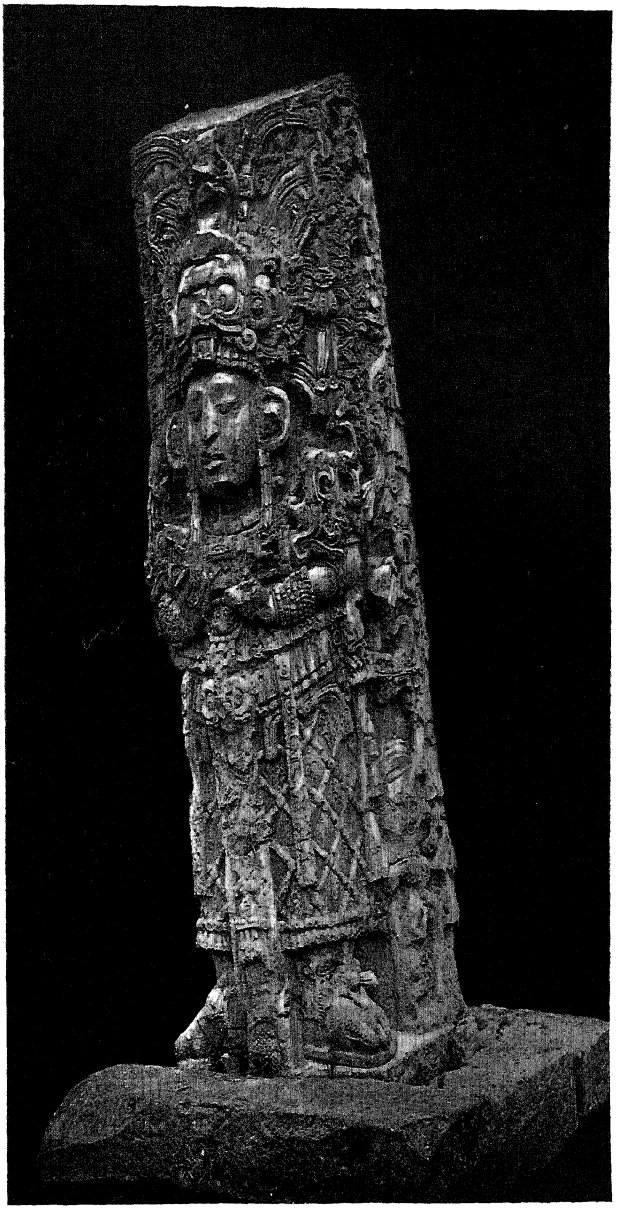
To see the old capital of Honduras, Comayagua, you must take your faithful steed once more; and riding the switchback trail you will follow in the footsteps of many a traveller of the last 400 years. Comayagua is beautifully situated; the sight of it is unfolded from between mountains that lie together like a half-closed fan, its pale-tinted houses with masses of

red roofs lying in a cup at the foot of the lovely cone of Comayagua mountain. Forty years ago a lonely lady came riding here, from Amapala to San Pedro Sula, to take up, as she thought, the work of teaching in a school for the children of Irish settlers, brought by the company that built the first strip of railway. When she reached her destination the colony had broken up, and " Soltera " continued her journey right across the width of Honduras to Puerto Cortés. She says of Comayagua that " The city is picturesquely built, but its silent, grass-grown streets, its air of poverty, and the absence of busy, stirring life, all announce that its glory has departed." Her description is still accurate; the tamarind trees and the blue convolvulus are as engaging; and the old houses still doze in the sun with their 10,000 or so of inhabitants. Comayagua has quite a dignified flavour, a certain colonial beauty; but a few miles outside you will find the country folk living on plantains, sun-dried deer and tapir meat, and drinking powdered maize steeped in water, as they did before the Spaniards came to the valleys of Honduras.

If there is a museum in Tegucigalpa or Comayagua, I never found it: while as to literature in Honduras (a country of good poets) and the Press, I quote from a magazine article on Honduran affairs, written a few years ago:

" El Nuevo Tiempo, a daily paper, has recently commenced publication in Tegucigalpa, taking the place of La Prensa, the former Government organ. It contains telegraphic and cable news, the Government paying two thousand pesos per month for news cables transmitted from Salvador. This is the only newspaper published in Honduras, has a circulation of 3,000, and charges per issue for advertising 8 cents gold " (say fourpence) " an inch, wide column, first page; other rates being obtainable from the office of publication. The President has stated that he wishes to give as much liberty as possible to the public press, and to encourage the dissemination of opinion."

I believe that this journal has fallen on evil days; but there is now an enterprising periodical of the banana coasts, *La Revista de Tela*, in which I recently read an account of the flourishing tobacco industry of the Copán region, which reminds us that Copán, with its magnificent ruined temples of stone, lies inside the Honduras border. But it is actually much more



CARVED STELA AT COPÁN, HONDURAS

accessible from Guatemala, although it can be reached from the old Honduran town of Gracias.

From Gracias some of the early Spanish settlers visited these wonders, believing that there was treasure hidden amongst those regal stone palaces. But all they found were " empty chests, one of which held priestly vestments and some altar coverings, stained with blood."

If these were actually priestly vestments of Copán, preserved by the circumstance of enclosure in stone boxes, the Spaniards would by keeping them have preserved a treasure worth to-day far more than gold. For not one fragment of ancient Maya Textile has yet been found.

Honduras has a reputation for tenacity, although it is not easy to discover how the feeling of the country is gauged. The ruling class of the capital is in fact the spokesman for all that wide expanse of mountainous country with its little out-of-the-world groups, with public opinion in Amapala affecting Tegucigalpa more than the far-off affairs of the Atlantic coast.

But to certain ideas Honduras has remained steadfast; that of Central American union, for example. Perhaps chiefly because Francisco Morazan, leader of the cause of Federation immediately after independence from Spain, was a native of Honduras, born of a Spanish-Honduran father and a French West Indian creole mother. It is difficult to believe in the efficacy of a union procured by fire and sword, and whatever Morazan's motives (probably, as in the case of San Martin and Bolivar, operating at about the same time, in South America, he hoped to emulate the military conquests of Napoleon) there is no doubt that his insistence upon an unworkable idea was one chief cause of internal quarrel; the new little countries were drenched with blood and set by the ears, a lamentable beginning for their essay in self-government.

When, with the downfall of Morazan in 1839, Guatemala under the able Indian Carrera withdrew from the federation, neither Honduras nor Salvador were willing to dissolve; Costa Rica was never a devotee of the idea, witnessed the break-up without grief, and thenceforth remained outside any plans for re-establishment of the union; Nicaragua, not so remote as Costa Rica, but with sections of her population out of

harmony with Guatemalan conservatism, has been indifferent, yet willing to listen. But for Salvador and Honduras a union with Guatemala was, and probably is, logical, despite sisterly disagreements; not only because their frontiers flow together and the set of mountains and rivers of Central America unites many interests, but because there is an ancient interlinking of race and languages. Honduras therefore clung longer than any other Central American State to the Confederation, and was instrumental in procuring the assembly of a Convention, with the hope of restoring the union, in 1842, and again in 1847.

Other unfruitful efforts have also been readily welcomed by Honduras, and so late as 1921 she joined another movement. The celebration of the centenary of the Republic occurred on September 15th, 1921, and at the same time the trio of Guatemala, Salvador and Honduras proclaimed their new bond into a Republic of Central America. Honduras showed her sincerity by giving up Tegucigalpa as the capital of the country, and leaving it to become as arranged the capital of the new federal republic, the Honduran Congress moving away to old Comayagua. But all efforts to find a working system of managing the unified republic were doomed to failure. Guatemala seceded, Salvador followed, and in February of 1922, after less than five months of experiment, Honduras found herself alone and resumed her independence.

In spite of all her hopes, the fact is that Honduras herself presents, in her financial entanglements, one of the big obstacles to the unified business management that would, without a doubt, greatly help Central America, and especially this triad. To understand the situation, it is necessary to look back for a moment to the year 1827, when London bankers lent money to the Central American Republic; the loan should have amounted to about one and a half millions sterling, but when the federation broke up only £163,000 had been issued. This debt was shared among the five republics, Guatemala assuming responsibility for the lion's share, five-twelfths; Nicaragua, two-twelfths; Costa Rica, one-twelfth; Salvador, two-twelfths; and Honduras, two-twelfths. Honduras thus became responsible for the repayment of £27,200; not a serious burden. But

she did not pay a penny of the interest due, or make any move whatever, until 1867, when she negotiated with the bondholders, not only because a belated conscience smote her, but because she wanted ardently to follow in her sisters' footsteps and to own a railroad. The old debt and accumulated interest and some other small liabilities were all funded into a 5 per cent. loan of £90,000, secured upon the customs duties of Amapala.

With this old difficulty cleared up, Honduras was able to get a new European loan for railway construction of a million pounds sterling, upon high terms, however; interest was 10 per cent. and the loan was issued at 80. In 1869 Honduras borrowed another £2,500,000, at six and three-quarters interest, and in 1870 got another £2,500,000. Both were secured upon the unbuilt railroad and the "natural products" of Honduras. For a couple of years Honduras paid the interest out of principal borrowed, and then all four loans went into default and have remained in default ever since, for over fifty years.

The creditors, with their difficulties eventually assisted by the Council of Foreign Bondholders sitting in London, made conciliatory offers on many occasions, and from time to time syndicates appeared from the blue with railway extension and debt cancelling schemes, the American Honduras Syndicate coming to grief in 1903, when the Honduras Government reassumed possession of the short length of line, some 50 miles, completed. In the year 1909 matters at last assumed a promising aspect. That capable diplomat, Sir Lionel Carden, proposed a plan by which the debt was scaled down by the Bondholders from its actual sum of about £23,000,000 to an amount upon which the Government of Honduras was in agreement; "but (says the Report of the Council) before the proposals could be submitted to the Bondholders the United States Government intervened and insisted upon the substitution of their own scheme of settlement." Which they were not, when it came to the point, able to carry out. Morgan of New York was to buy the outstanding bonds, giving fifteen pounds sterling for every hundred pounds face value, and there was to be American supervision of the Honduran customs houses. But Messrs. Morgan presently announced that they

were unprepared to pay the £15 per share cash, and the Honduras Congress took alarm at the prospect of physical intervention. They voted against the project.

The question remained in abeyance until 1923, when negotiations resulted in a " firm offer " from Honduras to pay £40,000 a year for thirty years, a total of £1,200,000. Although the shareholders would not be extravagantly treated, the effort on the part of a country as poor as Honduras is in pleasing contrast to the reason given by certain defaulting states of the United States, which is simply: " You can't make us pay."

Negotiations were interrupted by a revolution which ended about the middle of 1924, and which was one of the most serious in the history of Honduras in that it affected the Atlantic ports. Frequently, disturbances of this kind are confined to the capital, and to the military and political groups of the capital; a revolution is often no more than a *cuartelazo*, a barracks rising, followed by a demand presented at the presidential palace. It is, in fact, one of the simplest and least troublesome means of effecting a change of government in countries where an appeal to the electorate is not practicable. It should be? But how, gentle reader, would you collect the political opinions of Indian tribes living in remote jungles, and who do not understand Spanish? You would educate them? I hope not; they are quite happy so long as they are let alone; and when you had taught the bush tribes to read, what would you give them from the local bookshops . . . filled with Spanish translations of French novels?

With politics, with national debts, the native races of the country have little to do.

CHAPTER XII

THE ATLANTIC COAST OF HONDURAS

Puerto Cortés—The Louisiana Lottery—Cortés in Honduras—Naco —Bernal Diaz—Montejo's Work—What Benzoni Said—Gage in Honduras—An Interior Journey—Lake Yojoa—Ceiba—The Patuca Valley.

A DAY in Puerto Cortés, while the steamer waits to load bananas, or while one prepares for an inland journey, is quite enough for most people. It is an historical spot, in that its foundation dates back to that famous journey from Mexico to Honduras made by Hernan Cortés in 1524–6, but it has never grown into more than a village of wooden houses, palm shaded, steamy, with too much sun and too much rain for comfort. Lush green vegetation springs overnight, and so do hosts of every kind of biting insect, from sand-fly to the big black mosquito that attacks in battalions.

Landing at the tiny wharf, one walks along the single track railway to the chief houses of Puerto Cortés, leaf-cutting ants scurrying across the sleepers and little rosy mimosas pushing up fluffy heads beside the steel. When I first landed at this port there were two main sights. Both were to be found in the wooden hotel on the left-hand side of the track as one walked from the sea. One was the famous wheel of the Louisiana Lottery; the other was the hotel's owner, an American claiming the rank of "General" in a Central American army, and, according to his own modest claims, the hero of a hundred fights; he was always ready and willing to display scars that should have been mortal, and to confide to his listeners the whispered tale of some new revolution in which he was to take a decisive part. He held then some sort of commission from a Honduran government department, as the head of the police in Puerto Cortés; I saw no other police officials, and believe

that the hero had little to do but to lounge on the wide porch of his hotel and observe the passing of the twice-a-week train.

The last time I had seen him before this visit was in the dark patio of a Guatemalan hotel at midnight, when he had come to tell me of the *coup*, to take place as soon as he could get to the Honduras border, which had resulted in the Puerto Cortés job. His berth was safe until some new political cataclysm should put another saviour of his country into power in Tegucigalpa, but meanwhile he was darkly mysterious about other wonderful schemes. Rubber and coffee and banana plantations, of course, were his for the asking; but, like everybody else who has spent much time hanging round Guatemalan hotels, there was a concession in Petén spoken of with bated breath, a concession with gold and silver and turquoise mines, and everything else one cares to imagine.

Disclosing these wonders, he opened the door of the outhouse where the lottery wheel stood, and I took some of the little bits of black, hollow cane, with a stiff paper rolled inside bearing a number; one of these, under my hand as I write, is printed "58,288," so apparently figures ran high in the good old days when Louisiana ran the wheel. When, in a spasm of virtue, this lottery was declared illegal, the American operators shipped the huge apparatus to the neutral ground of the Republic of Honduras and resumed operations at Puerto Cortés, selling chances to old customers in the United States by mail. But presently new laws prohibited the use of the mails for lotteries, and too much money melted away in the post for the business to remain profitable; and, since Honduras signed an extradition treaty and this is no longer the haven for absconding bank-managers that it once was, there is not a large enough population in the port for so ambitious a game.

The railway serves banana plantations, runs south to San Pedro Sula on the river Chamelicon and a few miles beyond, into a beautiful and fertile valley where healthier conditions are found, as well as plenty of the right kind of soil for cereals and fruits and stock-raising.

Along this valley came the first fever-stricken Spanish colonists sixty or seventy miles to the Indian town of Naco, withdrawing from the sickliness of this foodless shore. These

RIVER TRAVEL IN HONDURAS

LUNCHING ON A SAND BAR

were the followers of Cristobal de Olid, lieutenant of Cortés, but seduced by Velasquez of Cuba, the mortal enemy of Cortés, into the rather meaningless act of rebellion against his leader; that is, proclaiming, upon that green and deadly shore, his own independence, and inviting his subsequent fate.

It was this Cristobal de Olid whom Cortés came to punish, on his great journey from Mexico in 1524–6. The army of Cortés, suffering much from hunger, and accompanied by the remnants of the three thousand Indian followers, suffering a great deal more, arrived on the borders of Honduras after skirting the great Amatique Gulf. On those shores they found a few wretched Spaniards, hunting for wild fruit to eat, survivors of a band brought to occupy the country by Gil González de Avila. From them Cortés learnt that Olid was already dead, and that many Spaniards had gone inland to Naco; he made his way from the Golfo Dulce to the "port of Honduras," where a few settlers of the original number sent from Mexico received him with joy, carrying him ashore in their arms, and taking him to their village and into a church. A cleric amongst the colonists then got up and made an oration, which Cortés gives in extenso in his Fifth Letter. He told how Olid had gone "through certain formalities which showed that he intended to shake off the obedience he owed to your worship," how Francisco de las Casas, sent by Cortés to punish Olid, later came with two vessels, was wrecked and taken prisoner, and how Gil González de Avila also fell into the hands of the bold rebel.

"One night when the three captains, that is to say Cristobal de Olid and his two prisoners, were together in the same room, and several other people with them, Francisco de las Casas, who had been disputing rather violently with Olid on certain matters, rushed suddenly upon him, seizing him by the beard, and, with a pen-knife that he held in his hand, for he had no other weapon with him, being at the time engaged in walking up and down the room and cutting his nails, gave him a cut across the throat, exclaiming: 'Down with the tyrant and his tyranny! We have borne it too long.' Then he and Gil González and others of your worship's servants who were then in the room, ran upon the weapons of the soldiers of Olid's bodyguard, and a scuffle ensued, in which the said Olid, the captain and ensign of his bodyguard, his field-officer and others, were wounded, or taken prisoners and dis-

armed, although none was killed. Cristobal de Olid, in the midst of the affray, managed to escape from the house and hide himself; but within two hours the above-mentioned captains succeeded in securing the persons of his principal adherents, and quieting the rest of the people, publicly proclaiming by the voice of the crier that whoever knew the whereabouts of Olid should report it under pain of death. He was soon afterwards found, put in irons, and on the next morning, having been tried in proper form, was beheaded, to the great satisfaction of all the settlers, who thus recovered their liberty."

The Spaniards at Naco were then given their choice of staying in the country or returning to Mexico with Francisco de las Casas. One hundred and ten stayed and Francisco de las Casas "provided us with everything we wanted, and bade us come to the seacoast to settle" (probably thinking them safer than inland, with reduced numbers, at Naco), "promising to obtain for us the necessary aid in men, weapons, horses, food, and all else needed to keep the country peaceful." They came first to the "port of San Andres, also called Puerto Caballos," and later named La Natividad de Nuestra Señora and now Puerto Cortés; they did not like the situation, and came on, "putting their heavy goods into a caravel that had lately come from the islands" (Cuba or Española), and marching by land to Trujillo, of whose advantages they knew. To their dismay, the caravel had not arrived; but, true Spaniards, they "went on building the town, and took possession of the surrounding country in his Majesty's name, and had a legal act of the whole ceremony drawn up before the notary of the municipality."

A few days later a caravel appeared two leagues off shore, and this turned out to be under the command of one Moreno, from Española, come here from the Audiencia of Santo Domingo to find out what was happening in the matter of Olid. His ship was well provided, and the Trujillo colonists asked for provisions. "To this he answered that he was not come hither to provide for our wants, and would not give us anything unless we paid him on the spot in gold or slaves." This the settlers could not do, and next it was demanded that they should depose their civic authorities and receive Juan Ruano, from the ship, as leader. They refused at first, but at length consented, binding themselves with signatures and oaths to

receive Ruano, while the town's name was changed to "Ascension," and the colonists recognized the authority of the Audiencia of Santo Domingo. They were then supplied with goods, a raid made and natives seized, branded and taken away. But no sooner were the ships out of sight than the townsmen seized on the person of Juan Ruano, imprisoned him, and replaced the municipal officers . . . "and we have since been, and are still, subject to your worship's orders in his Majesty's name."

Cortés solemnly pardoned them, confirmed the officers, and wrote an accusatory letter to Española, demanding the person of Moreno; meanwhile he turned his attention to the pressing question of the Indians in the regions behind Trujillo, but before much was done he received by ship news of grave disorders in Mexico, where reports had been spread that he and his army were all dead. Many wives of Cortés' soldiers had married other men. Three times Cortés set sail to return, and three times was he driven back to Trujillo; so he decided to send a vessel with dispatches and to complete the subjugation of Honduras, through his captains, while recruiting his health at Trujillo. He says of the interior expeditions:

"My men marched for five and thirty leagues through a beautiful valley, filled with many large and populous villages, abounding in all manner of native fruits, and well suited to raise any kind of cattle, in addition to all the vegetables and plants of the Peninsula. They had no angry encounter with the natives; on the contrary, they . . . succeeded in gaining their good will. In consequence, no less than twenty chiefs of large villages came to visit me and with great willingness offered themselves for subjects and vassals of your Majesty, promising to obey your royal commands, as they have since done and are still doing, for to the day of my departure I had always some of them with me, those who went away being immediately replaced by others who came and brought provisions to the town and did everything to be agreeable to us."

Others, however, were not so amenable; and, in spite of all the gentle persuasion of troops of Spanish horse, the natives who had fled to the mountains could not all be persuaded to return to the near-by villages. One obstinate chief was seized; "legal proceedings were instituted against the inhabitants of

that province, and war carried on in their territory, about one hundred of them being taken prisoner and made slaves. Pizacura (the chief) himself was of that number." But instead of becoming a good vassal, Pizacura "died of illness." The punishment, however, was so far salutary that "the province was completely pacified" and the inhabitants were divided between the Spaniards, serving them, apparently, with "perfect good will."

Cortés had by this time made up his mind to cross the continent, visit Nicaragua, and return by the Soconusco coast after traversing and helping to reduce Guatemala. There the Quiché were still sporadically giving trouble, and the Kakchiquel people, at first ready for alliance with the Spaniards, had become angered and had themselves risen and were making Tecpan Guatemala an uncomfortable capital for the Spaniards. But Cortés was turned from this purpose by fresh news of dissensions in Mexico, and once more embarked.

He left behind in Honduras, despite entreaties, his good friend Bernal Diaz del Castillo, with the main body of the expeditionary army. All of them ardently wanted to return to their estates in Mexico. Bernal Diaz was then near Olancho, famous for its gold, and was "delighted at the news" that Cortés was on his way back, and that they might, if not by sea, go back by land. "I remember," says the old soldier, "that we hurled stones at the country we were leaving behind, crying, 'Stay where you are, evil land, for with God's help we will march to Mexico.'" They made at once for the Pacific, and had the luck to meet with Pedro de Alvarado himself at Choluteca. "One can hardly describe his delight when he knew that Cortés had gone to Mexico, for it released him from the laborious journey which he was to take in search of him, and was a relief to them all."

Continuing to Guatemala and Mexico, Bernal Diaz marches out of the history of Honduras, traversing the land of Cuscutlán (Salvador) "which was hostile and where we found plenty to eat," after crossing the Lempa river.

This was the beginning of Spanish occupation of Honduras. From that time forward we get occasional glimpses, but the detailed history of the country has yet to be written. Appar-

ently there was never any concerted rising of the native races; but what became of them? It is plain from the narrative of Cortés and from that of Bernal Diaz that in 1526 Honduras was thickly populated and that the interior valleys at least were cultivated. Yet in Benzoni's day, the colonies languished, according to his account quoted below. But meanwhile, in 1539 Don Antonio de Mendoza records that the Adelantado Montejo (conqueror of Yucatan) sends letters from Honduras speaking of the great wealth of the mines, and says that the country is "very pacific." Montejo's own report is extant; he says that he pacified the region of San Pedro Sula (Naco having apparently been given up) "without losing a life or taking a slave." A site was sought which should serve as a link in the line of communication with Guatemala, and, in the midst of tumbled, interminable mountains, Juan de Chaves found, at last, "tierra llana," flat ground, gave thanks to God for it, and thus founded the pueblo of Gracias á Dios some forty miles from the Guatemalan boundary, on the road from Petapa.

Montejo says the country is in a "needy state," because the "Achies" have kept up war, and the Indians are hiding in the Sierras; some he induced to return, and these started cultivating fields again. He had had to help Alonso de Caceres, then pacifying the Comayagua Valley; the town of Santa Maria de Comayagua (afterwards the capital during colonial times) was founded; but the Indians are "obstinate fighters," and persisted in attacking the Spaniards whenever they caught them on roads. Montejo says he has decided to divide out the Olancho Valley, but there are very few Indians to be had as workers.

Comayagua is in a very beautiful and fruitful vale; but without Indians what was to be done? He wants Negroes, to cultivate the rugged land; but there was little money to pay for them because "all the Spaniards are in want, much grieved to see themselves in a land so rich, without means to enjoy it." The gold cannot be got out without slaves or other workers, and these particular Indians of Honduras "cannot be scolded or forced." They are, in fact, "few and delicate," and if they are used as Alvarado used his Guatemala Indians. in two years

there would be none at all. Montejo alternates warnings with optimism; he has planted vines at Gracias, "and now these vines are full of fruit, the first I have seen in these parts"; he has sown wheat, and this crop grows well. There is plenty of wood and water and "more metal than in all the rest of New Spain."

His hopes were not realized. Honduras languished, the Indians melted from sight. When Bernal Diaz wrote between 1568 and 1605, he had this to say of the country:

"... I will go on to tell of the governors of the province of Honduras sent by the Geronimite friars who were Governors of the Island of Santo Domingo—and pray God they will never send such men again—for they were very bad and never did any justice at all; for besides ill-treating the Indians of that province they branded many of them as slaves and sent them to be sold to Hispaniola and Cuba and to the Island of San Juan de Baruquen."

He goes on to say that he knows the country, for he was there with Cortés,

"and it was thickly peopled and at peace, and the people were living in their houses with their wives and children; but as soon as these governors came they destroyed them to such an extent that in the year fifteen hundred and fifty-one, when I passed through there on my return from Castile, two Caciques who had known me in the old days told me with tears in their eyes of all their misfortunes and the treatment they had received, and I was shocked to see the country in such a condition."

A year after Bernal's visit the province was removed from the jurisdiction of the Audiencia of Santo Domingo and placed finally under the Guatemala Audiencia's jurisdiction.

Now Benzoni, whose account of his journeys in Spanish America (1541–1555) are however coloured by his Italian nationality and lack of love for Spain. He says that there were above four hundred thousand Indians in Honduras when the Spaniards conquered it, but that at the time of his visit there were not eight thousand left, "for what with those killed in war, others sold as slaves, and many worn out in the mines and other unbearable labour, the conquerors had inhumanly destroyed them." The few who remained ran away when they

could. Here is Benzoni's sidelight upon conditions thirty-five years after the conquest of Honduras:

"The Spaniards have built five towns in that province; but the houses do not altogether amount to more than a hundred and twenty, the greater part constructed with reeds, covered with straw, and ill-inhabited in consequence of the gold mines being nearly worked out. The principal of them, Trujillo, is situated on a little hill near the northern shore.

"A hundred miles lower down is Puerto dos Caballos; and a day's journey from this port lies the town of San Pedro (Sula), erected on a plain near some mountains, not far from the river Ulua, and a lake that has on it some heaps of earth covered with grass and bushes, which move about in one direction or the other, according as the winds blow. Eighty miles farther on lies Comayagua and Gracias Dios, which two towns are upwards of a hundred miles apart, and the country being somewhat cold, produce a great deal of wheat. Then we enter into the beautiful and delightful but already destroyed valley of Olancho, where the Spaniards erected a town called St. Jacobo, consisting of about twenty houses, covered with straw and ill-inhabited."

He says that the country had become so poor that "there are Spaniards, not only in this place but in many other towns also who, though possessing vassals, are reduced to such misery that they have hardly bread to eat."

Friar Gage, visiting Trujillo with the Prior of Coban after their unfortunate expedition into the Petén region, about eighty years after Benzoni, had a similarly poor opinion of the condition of Honduras:

"We staied not long above a week in that Port (which is a weak one, as the English and Hollanders taking of it can witness) but presently we thought of returning back to Guatemala by land through the country of Comayagua, commonly called Honduras. This is a woody and mountainous Country, very bad and inconvenient for travellers, and besides very poor; there the commodities are hides, Canna fistula, and Zarzaparilla, and such want of bread that about Truxillo they make use of what they call Cassave, which is a dry root that being eaten dry doth choak, and therefore is soaked in broth, water, wine or chocolate, that so it may go down. Within the country and especially about the city of Comayagua (which is a Bishops seat, though a small place of some five hundred inhabitants at the most) there is more store of maize by reason of some Indians, which are gathered to Towns, few and small. I found this country one of the poorest in all America. The chief place in it for health and good living is the valley which is called Gracias a Dios, where are some rich farms

of Cattle and Wheat; but because it lieth as near to the country of Guatemala as to Comayagua, and on this side the ways are better than on that, therefore more of that Wheat is transported to Guatemala and to the towns about it than to Comayagua or Truxillo."

No doubt some day the northern ports of Honduras will be connected by rail, and there will be through connexion to Tegucigalpa and Comayagua and farther south still to the Pacific coast; but the distances are greater than in any other Central American country (except northern Nicaragua, where similar unopened conditions prevail) and the mountains run in all directions in a tremendous uplifted network that would break the heart of any road-builder. Most efficacious barrier of all, the population is still so scant that there is no traffic to reward the railway operator. The villages are incredibly poor, and there seems to be a perennial shortage of food.

Once upon a time I made a six weeks' journey through that part of the northern interior of Honduras lying between Puerto Cortés and its more easterly sister port, La Ceiba, starting just after Christmas and emerging in early February. Rain poured out of the sky almost every day, and in the higher altitudes there was a constant blanket of mist that lifted only fitfully to show a splendid view of gorges and torrents and peaks; the roads were nothing but muddy tracks, and for long stretches there was neither shelter nor food obtainable. Luckily we had a morose but competent pack-mule, carrying stores and waterproof bedding, and the mozo (a broad-faced Indian boy who trotted, barefoot, during the whole trip) was able to rig a shelter and cook a meal at any time, independent of wayside inns.

We left Puerto Cortés by train for San Pedro Sula, where horses had been ordered by letter and telegraph; but 90 per cent. of the inhabitants of this town are said by the Rockefeller Institute to suffer from hookworm, which explains a great deal about San Pedro Sula. No one met the train, and the horses were not ready. However, next day we got off, whence we struck south and east in order to reach the Ulua river and there ride south by the central valley of the triple stream to Lake Yojoa, passing by Potrerillos, where the rail now runs; to-day the main high road is being completed all the

way from the Pacific via Comayagua and Siguatepeque, thence skirting the east side of the lake, and it is likely that this macadam road will serve Honduras business for many years to come. This highway, 385 kilometres long, or about 275 miles, follows an ancient trail of the native folk; but do not be misled by the assemblage of names upon maps into the belief that this is a region of many little towns and villages. Many of these names are passes or valley points, or mark the sites of indigenous ranchos offering less shelter than the simplest dak bungalow of India; for, as Wells remarked in 1853 when he visited Honduras, "the topography of the country seems to have been thrown in haphazard to fill up unsightly blanks in the map."

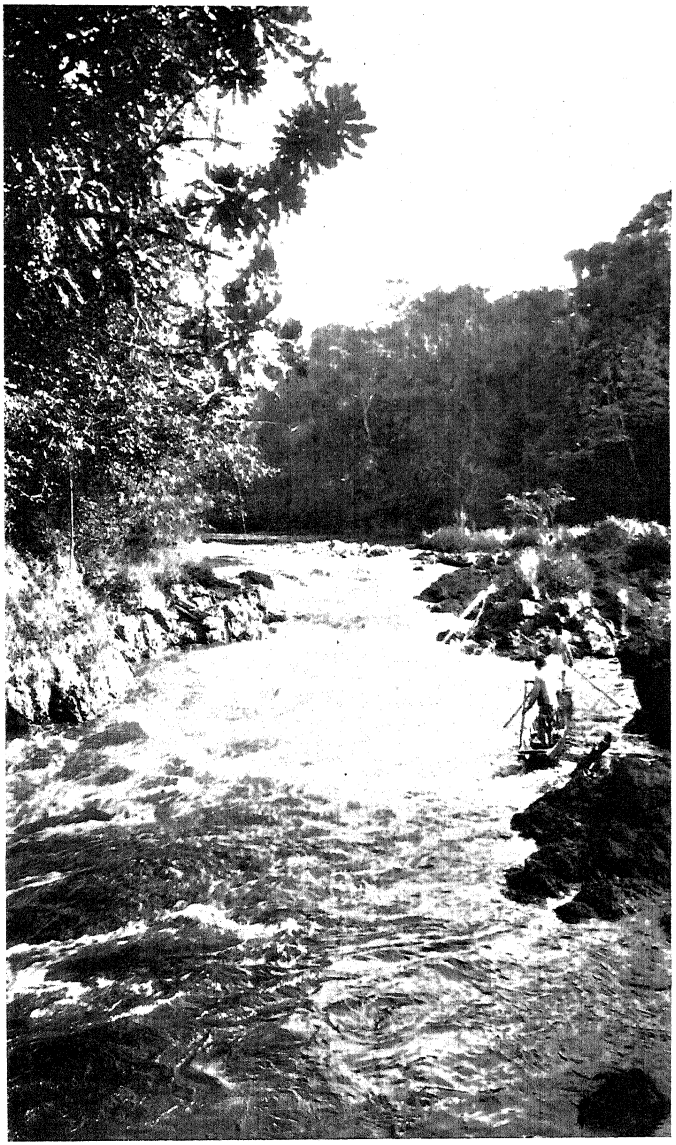
Lake Yojoa was veiled in angry, driving rain-clouds; but it is a fine sheet of water, draining two ranges of surrounding mountains that send their spurs almost to the margin. We turned east, to the valley of the Sulaco, beholding in that inclement, cold, inhospitable journey to Sulaco village some of the most splendid mountain scenery of América Central. The tumbled masses, eternally green, of the Sulaco range, kept us company, sullen heads showing their granite cores; but the trail was sticky, the river fords a misery, and when certain gold mines were reached I marvelled once more at the attraction that a job of work possesses—enough, at least, to retain men in this unlikely region. Yoro, encountered as we turned north for the coast, was so surprisingly large and populated that it came as a shock, after weeks of foodless little mud huts, grass-thatched: there must be fifteen hundred people here. Between Yoro and Lima it rained relentlessly, although the rainy season had been over for a month; all the trails were four or five inches deep in mud, and the rivers were swollen. And nowhere was it possible to cajole or purchase a hot meal. The few people who sat in their frail little houses, staring at the rain, had neither tortillas nor the inevitable black bean stew of Central America. No, despite the imposing scenery, this is not yet the region for tourists.

Crossing in a sweeping mist the broken foothills of a range running parallel to the coast, we arrived in a different world: hot, bright, banana lands, with scores of busy, little planta-

tion lines, carrying myriads of green bunches up to the port. This is sugar country, too, immense fields spreading over undulating ground near the coast. And here, presently, is La Ceiba, with about 10,000 people, a white-wooden-house, palmy, hibiscus, Negro port. For as everywhere up and down the Atlantic coast of Central America, without the active, strong, cheerful Negro there could be no industry, and the ports would presently disappear as they did in Spanish colonial days when there was neither gold nor population to create towns.

The plantations, the railway, the wharf that runs out 1,200 feet from the shore to deep water, and the chief trade of the port, are all the property of one banana company; another bears a similar relation to Puerto Cortés and Omoa, while a third banana-shipping company of the Caribbean operates Tela and Puerto Castilla and Trujillo with their respective plantation lines. These are small, busy worlds, which have practically nothing to do with Honduras Republic. Their dominions and employment include comparatively few Hondureños by birth, despite a law enjoining a 75 per cent. proportion of Hondurans-born among workers. Their imports are, under special concessions, for the main part duty free (machinery and railway material amongst them), their stores are supplied from the United States, and their products pay no export dues.

One banana port is very like another, but farther towards the frontier with Nicaragua is the great valley of the Patuca, called the Guayape in the upper reaches of the interior. Here, on the coast where the fine stream opens to the sea, are the kind of hot steamy flat lands where the banana goes through its short life with satisfaction to the grower—a simple process enough. A bit of root stock is planted, left alone for ten months, and has then produced a single stalk of the alleged fruit; which, if displaying a minimum of nine "hands," of about a dozen bananas each "hand," is saleable to banana companies for a price of about two shillings. From the old plant, which you must cut down to the ground, four "sons" will now obligingly spring, and each of these is, in another ten months' time, the parent of yet another bunch of bananas;



RIO PLANTAIN, HONDURAS REPUBLIC
(ATLANTIC COAST)

your original plant is now a "hill," and may be divided and planted out as stock for a new grove. I need not add that the banana stalk is cut while green, and, hurried to the waiting steamer, is frequently accompanied overseas by mosquitoes, scorpions and snakes.

But behind the banana country is clean rising land, grassy, fresh, where "ocotales" or pine forests have brought lumber companies, and turned many thoughts to colonization schemes. The Poyas Indians, however, have the country much to themselves as yet.

Up the beautiful valley of the Patuca you may search for the ruins of the sixteenth-century City of Olancho, in a green and hill-guarded cup. It flourished for a time upon the golden sands of the river, and the devout gathered enough gold grains to make a statue of the Virgin. All but her crown. And, gold or devotion failing, this was made of leather. The Virgin was angry, refused to wear the leather crown, and in her just annoyance destroyed the first city of Olancho. The settlers moved away, and left the ruins to the lianas and birds and wild cats of Honduras.

CHAPTER XIII

NICARAGUA: CORINTO AND LEÓN

The Lie of the Land—A Fertile Country—Corinto—Railways—Zelaya—United States Intervention—The Dusky Consul—Horky's Birthday—Environs of Corinto—Train to León—Chinandega—Chichigalpa—San Antonio—Arrival at León—Cathedral—Churches—Panteón—Poets of Nicaragua.

ACROSS Nicaragua the great backbone of volcanic mountains runs fairly parallel with the Pacific coast, and generally about 100 miles inland.

Under the western slopes of this barrier lie Nicaragua's two splendid lakes; the smaller water, Lake Managua, lies 28 feet higher than Lake Granada (or Nicaragua; or, to give its ancient name, Cosibolca), pouring its flood into its easterly sister by way of the Tipitapa River; Lake Granada in turn empties east into the Caribbean by the channel of the San Juan River. Clustered about the two lakes are now, and have been from time immemorial, the chief settled populations of Nicaragua; the towns stand at altitudes of no more than 100 to 150 feet, an unusual condition for Central America, where old native and later Spanish populations chiefly sought the secure highlands for the establishment of settled towns; but here great fertile spaces are created by the withdrawal of the volcanic wall. Beyond this wall, eastward, is a region twice the size of the lacustrine country, forming a huge triangle whose base lies along the valley of the Wanks River, with one side resting upon the mountains and the other tattered among the Caribbean reefs and lagoons. At the apex is the mouth of the San Juan River.

Among the north-easterly spurs of the central ridge are the great coffee and mining regions of Nicaragua, with the towns

of Ocotal (Segovia) and Matagalpa as the centres of trade. But, when they are left, all the great area of Nicaragua's main triangle is given up to long networks of river and swamp, wide rolling grass-lands, and deep tropic jungle. The only settled towns are on the coastal fringe, as Bluefields and Greytown, or Gracias in the far north at the Honduras border; and river stations which are collecting points for country produce, with Rama, on the river Bluefields or Escondido, as the chief exemplar.

The tangled forest and river regions are not deserted. Undisturbed but by occasional mahogany hunters and river traders the indigenous tribes of Nicaragua dwell in far-spreading groups; many are shy semi-nomads, living in the Stone Age; others, as the Mosquitoes whose history is one of the comedies of Central America, have mixed with Negroes.

Of the twenty-five chief rivers running into the Caribbean between Greytown and Gracias á Dios more than a dozen are known as yielders of gold; search for these shining grains has brought many a white man adventuring to the long, steamy Atlantic slope of Nicaragua. But the time has not yet come when settled towns can be built in this wide region. Far north of the Wanks River great areas of Honduras are of the same character. They are as empty, as primitive, in the same striking contrast to conditions upon the drier Pacific slope.

Nicaragua's pleasant Pacific lands have charmed visitors ever since the Spanish conquest. The first Protector of the Indians, Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, wrote of the region:

> "The fertility of the soil, the excellence of its air, and the vast number of its inhabitants, are almost beyond description. Cities were there extending for over four leagues. The enormous quantities of delicious fruits native to these regions brought these multitudes of people. The cities were spread upon wide plains, and there were no near-by mountains in which to take refuge; nor could the inhabitants readily decide to leave so agreeable and fruitful a place; and thus they were exposed more than in other places to the persecutions and demands of the Spaniards."

Oviedo the historian, too, thought well of Nicaragua: "There is not in all the Indies a land more fertile and better

cultivated than this. The climate is healthy and agreeable, the water is excellent and fish abundant."

Rich Nicaragua, poor Nicaragua.

Ninety-nine visitors out of a hundred enter Nicaragua by the Pacific port of Corinto; the great bulk of exports and imports likewise move through this gateway. As a place of such considerable importance it is comparatively new, for in Spanish colonial days shipping entered a neighbouring inlet to Realejo, while much traffic also came and went by a river and inlet giving on to the Bay of Fonseca—named after that formidable Bishop who presided for so many years over the Council of the Indies in Seville. From 1850 onwards, while the famous Transit was in operation, San Juan del Sur became the chief Pacific port; but with the opening of the first section of the Panama Railway in 1855 the Transit's rush of Forty-niners began to dwindle, and if the Walker affair did not actually extinguish the route, the *coup de grâce* was given by the completion of the first transcontinental railroad across the United States in 1869. San Juan del Sur shrank and grew shabby.

Corinto as a lively little modern port was created by the railroad, begun in 1884. The line was originally built from the sea's edge at Corinto (with a little pier and warehouses) and ran through Chinandega and Chichigalpa to León, with a branch to the little town of Momotombo, squatting below the volcano of that name on the edge of Lake Managua. A railway was also built from Granada, on the second and larger lake to Managua, but the old enmity between León and Granada was too active to permit, then, a through connexion by rail: passengers in León who wanted to reach Granada had to take a boat at Momotombo and run down the lake border to Managua to take the railway.

Until, that is to say, José Santos Zelaya appeared upon the political scene in 1893. He, a capable and energetic ruler, had no intention of permitting these old feuds to continue, and constructed the link between León and Managua that made a coherent network of the Nicaraguan lines. All of this network lies on the Pacific side: but when Zelaya was

obliged to resign and leave the country in 1909 work had already commenced upon his pet scheme, a railway connecting the Atlantic coast, at Monkey Point, with the northern shore of Lake Nicaragua at San Miguelito. Rusting rails and machinery mark the two ends of this railway: work was abandoned, and, after American intervention, the rest of the money borrowed by Zelaya from the Ethelburga Syndicate for construction was applied to other purposes. But the need for and practicability of the line remain apparent.

Nicaragua still discusses with ardour the character and deeds of Zelaya, the only ruler of this country who perpetuated himself in office for a long period and who warranted the name of dictator. The methods he employed roused much opposition from persons of a different political "colour"; there is no doubt that he was fiercely autocratic, appointed friends to office, handed out or sold concessions, and permitted juggling with tax collection; but you will also hear to-day that Zelaya had a cheerful and resolute common sense, that he did much and planned more for the economic strength of the country, that in his time Nicaragua was solvent, paid her foreign debt obligations punctually, and maintained her independence and prestige; that education was advanced, religious freedom made a reality; and that graft had, in that time, at least the merit of being all in the Nicaraguan family. One may also add that the citizens experienced the satisfaction, not to be despised in a land of little sport and few entertainments, of political plotting and intermittent revolutionary activities. No absolute ruler is quite safe in the saddle; and American presidents have been perhaps particularly uneasy; but Zelaya might have lasted as long as his grimmer confrère, the Licenciado Manuel Estrada Cabrera of Guatemala, had he not fallen foul of the United States.

Reasons for Nicaraguan wariness with regard to *el Tio Sam* dated from Walker's day; while possession of a possible interoceanic canal route has proved a sharpener of suspicion, and, in the event, a curse rather than a blessing. Ever since 1517, when a follower of Balboa, the Spanish engineer Alvaro de Saavedra Cerón, suggested to the King of Spain the feasibility of cutting a canal across the Isthmus, a transcontinental

waterway had been considered; the actual utilization of Nicaragua's natural channel of river and lake proved for centuries the practical rival of the Panama vision, and the merits of the Nicaraguan route were passionately discussed and defended when the tremendous development of mechanisms in the nineteenth century brought great engineering plans to the door of every promising country.

Traditionally, Granada was in favour of the creation of a commercial canal; standing directly upon the waterway, she would gain in dignity. León opposed the plan. But Zelaya saw the controversy ended, so far as the United States was concerned, when Roosevelt obtained control of the Panama belt, and thenceforth he gave his immediate attention to construction of a railroad link. Not that he was indifferent to the advantages of canal engineering: he is said to have received offers from both German and Japanese quarters, and whether any definite plan was in the offing or not, the circulation of the story accentuated North American anxiety. A feeling of hostility developed, and presently Zelaya had cause for complaint when the undercurrent of revolutionary activity in Nicaragua received the aid of individual Americans. In November, 1909, two North Americans, Groce and Cannon, were caught red-handed in an attempt to dynamite the river steamer *Diamante*, at Castillo Viejo, with 300 Nicaraguan soldiers aboard. Groce and Cannon were tried and shot. A few months later the United States, with this execution as an excuse, broke off relations with Nicaragua with the object of forcing Zelaya's elimination, succeeding when the greatly encouraged revolutionists in Bluefields and San Juan del Norte were able to hold the old Mosquito Coast and threaten the interior. Zelaya resigned and went to Europe—not quite penniless, it is said. He left the succession to the respected Dr. Madriz, but he, as inheritor of Zelaya's policies, was also obnoxious, and the Atlantic coast revolution persisted until in 1911 the remarkable Dawson Pact, arranged by the then American Minister, Mr. Thomas C. Dawson, decided upon future presidents, and future presidential policies, of Nicaragua. The sight of American marines, quartered in the official residence of the president, became a feature of Managua; the

control of all Nicaraguan custom-houses, of the railroads, of the lake and steamer services, by citizens of the United States, rapidly followed. Next, with the rosy vision of a $15,000,000 loan in sight, the government of Nicaragua agreed to the carrying out of a Monetary Plan, by which all the existing paper currency of about 50,000,000 *pesos* was retired and a new currency of *córdobas*, but only 4,000,000 of them, was issued. The córdoba, backed by metal, is equivalent in exchange value to a United States dollar; about three-quarters of this high-value money has already disappeared, and Nicaragua has insufficient currency for her daily needs, with the result that a constant financial stringency prevails. At the same time a new and sole Bank of issue was established at the suggestion of Nicaragua's new advisers; the banking company was registered in New Jersey, with a branch in New York, to which city the customs collections were, for a long time, shipped. A Mixed Claims Commission, a High Commission controlling all national finance, including collection of internal revenues, came into being; but no loan was ever made, and the $15,000,000 faded from the horizon. Presently, however, when Nicaragua's governmental poverty invited internal unrest, the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty was signed by which the United States agreed to pay $3,000,000 in exchange for exclusive rights over the projected Nicaraguan Canal route, including control over the Corn Islands in the Atlantic and a site for a United States naval base in Fonseca Bay. As Costa Rica owns part of the right bank of the San Juan River, and both Salvador and Honduras possess territory on the shores of Fonseca Bay, this allocation brought trouble with Nicaragua's neighbours, followed by a suit before the Central American Court of Justice, a decision in favour of Costa Rica, Salvador and Honduras . . . and the dissolution of the Court of Justice aforesaid.

The Nicaraguan Government bought back recently, for $1,600,000, the railroads which were handed over in exchange for $1,000,000 early in the days of occupation; and are now again planning the Monkey Point line, resurveyed at a startling cost in 1923. But the American Marines are still in Managua, although their departure has been frequently

projected, and American gunboats still decorate the sea outside Nicaragua's little ports. When they go Nicaragua must face with the best courage and resource of her best brains her old political problem; to the execution of that task she will bring the lively memory of an intervention that cost her dear, in material things. So far as reputation in Latin America is concerned, the balance is against the intervener.

Corinto lies on a baking beach of dark volcanic sand, on the northern arm of a well-protected bay. The streets are of sand, the footpaths raised high above them. All the buildings are of wood, painted in white or some light and gay colour, and the best houses either face the sea or the line of the railway, where the daily train is a source of pride and interest. Every one sits out upon the verandas at night, and there is among the foreigners—agents of steamships, owners of stores, consular officials, and so on—that family atmosphere not unusual in a small town in somebody else's tropics. The only people I ever encountered in Corinto who complained of loneliness were an American consul and his wife: and their skins happened to be dusky. The consul was, in fact, a Negro, an able and cultivated Negro, writer of good verse and author of a clever novel. He had performed some political service to the Republican party, and asked for a consular job abroad as a reward; after, one supposes, a good deal of head-scratching and searchings of the map of the world, Nicaragua was selected, presumably because the inhabitants were imagined as dark-skinned likewise. But Nicaragua took this as a reflection, while white North Americans often behaved as Americans behave at home in the presence of a "coloured man." I have rarely heard a more pathetic lament than that once made by this consul to the writer: "We lack congenial society . . . when my wife and I read Dante together in the original, there is no one here to share our pleasure." No, not in Corinto.

February in Corinto is a month of terrific heat, half-way through the dry season; even the lovely guanacaste trees, widespreading their branches thick with polished green leaves, the feathery flamboyants and the low-growing *almendros* with their tiers of horizontal boughs, are pale with dust.

Yet could the truthful spirit of George Washington have visited this port on February 22nd a few years ago he would have found celebrations of his natal day proceeding with vigour that defied the heat.

There was a newly-arrived American Consul with a handsome wife; neither of them had more Spanish than a Short Cut to Modern Languages had instilled during the trip from San Francisco. But, anxious to uphold the dignity of his post, the Consul was agreeably flattered when he was deferentially approached by the Alcalde (that is, the Mayor) of Corinto with congratulations upon the birthday of the great Jorge Washington. To Anglo-Saxon ears, Jorge is "Horky": so let us call the hero Horky during the relation of this brief incident. For the Alcalde proffered a request together with his felicitations. All Corinto, it appeared, wanted to celebrate the birthday of the great Horky; the town band, in particular, was eager, and there had been great purchases of *cohuetes*—the fireworks beloved of Central America. Might they visit the Consulate in the evening?

The Consul was pleased and proud. He invited the élite of the town, the heads of the foreign colony, officers from the *Denver*, laid in a stock of bottles and siphons, and prepared for an evening of courtesies. When the night was hushed but for the squeal of the mosquito and his victim, a white-clad party gathered upon the veranda of the consulate with its choice outlook upon the railway track; the town band appeared in force, the town officials and a care-free Nicaraguan crowd. "Dixie" was inevitably played. Next, the tune to which Britons murmur such words as they know of "God Save the King" while citizens of the United States hum the first two lines of "My country, 'tis of thee." High-power refreshments were then served to the accompaniment of high-explosive fireworks; another band-piece, more drinks, more *cohuetes*, and then from loud whisperings in the Nicaraguan group transpired the ardent desire of the Segundo Alcalde—the Deputy Mayor—to make a speech.

What a bore, thought and murmured the persons about to be addressed; these Spanish-American compliments, this fulsome adulation of Uncle Sam—well, it was all in the day's

work, one's duty to take it gracefully. The Consul bowed, his consort smiled, as the orator bent low before them, and then, standing upon the very edge of the open veranda where his friends' ready arms had hoisted him, waved his arms and poured out a flood of eloquent Spanish. His speech was as Greek to the Consul; but whenever he caught the words "Horky Ou-ashing-tón" he bowed once more. In brief, the Segundo Alcalde was saying this:

"Let us to-day honour the great Horky Washington! The ever memorable birthday of that good, that noble man. A gentleman indeed, a splendid caballero, was Don Horky. Honest, upright, a man of his word, truthful, generous . . ."

His hearers, their faces wreathed with appreciative if somewhat mechanical smiles, clapped their hands and smiled, as he paused for breath.

"Well might the señores here present give honour to such a man. Well might the Norte Americanos make a hero of him. Truly they should. For not only was he a truly good and honourable man, but a marvel in the land of the yanquis. A wonder, a non-such. A phœnix. Just think of it! A truthful and straightforward man . . . among such as the Norte Americanos are! Unique was Horky! Well should they raise their glasses to this only specimen."

The Segundo Alcalde raised his glass, the Consul his, and the visitors to whom the Spanish speech was no mystery did the same, although with a certain shifting in their chairs, a hesitation. But the Alcalde, charmed with the reception of his exposition, flowed on.

"For what," he asked heaven and his hearers with grand gestures, "what were the general run of the people of that northern land? One had but to look about; at the unhappy Haiti, at ruined Santo Domingo; at la pobre Nicaragua, robbed and cheated, herself. What were they but a set of robbers?"

He addressed the Consul earnestly; the Consul, convinced that some specially fulsome tribute was being paid, half rose and bowed.

An old foreign resident of the place had by this time edged to the front of the platform, and as his mouth fell slightly open during the development of the Segundo Alcalde's argu-

ment, he signalled imperatively to the Alcalde. "Stop that speech," he said, and the Alcalde, somewhat dazed by potent liquors, laid a hand upon the arm of his Deputy. But the orator, warmed by applause, shook him off, advanced a step, appealed to the Consul's lady. "Were the barbarisms of the North to destroy the high culture of Nicaragua?" he begged. She inclined a smiling front. "These naval bullies, with their ships and guns"—he waved a hand to the *Denver's* representative, and he, too, accepted the bouquet. "To the great, the unique, the one honest Horky, let us drink," cried the delighted Segundo Alcalde, but at that moment somebody, from below the veranda, obtained a firm hold upon the orator's cotton coat and with a dexterous movement jerked him backwards into the dust. At the same time the band raised its weapons, trombones and drums filled the air, and amid a volley of fireworks and the notes of the Nicaraguan National Anthem the further remarks of the Segundo Alcalde were lost for ever, while the group upon the veranda continued to applaud with unabated serenity.

What, you ask, became of the Segundo Alcalde? I, too, wanted to know, and inquiring concerning that son of Demosthenes some three weeks later, was told: "He's still in jail."

I will not pretend that there are good hotels in Corinto. Their sins are of omission, not of commission, and the list of things you cannot get begins with comfortable beds and ends with real tea. Perhaps the heat renders them unessential. You may occupy evenings in Corinto, after the sun has disappeared with clockwork regularity at 6 p.m., by wandering through the town's fringes and watching the cheerful Nicaraguenses, clad in shirts and cotton trousers only, playing cards by lantern light at tables set in the middle of the road. Farther out still are scores of happy little shacks where brown-skinned children sleep in the soft sand under guava and orange trees, and woods where the long tongues of the sea lick the mangrove roots. By day, there are excursions to be made —you may hire a motor-boat and explore the network of islands and long inlets, palm edged, and mangrove- and willow-fringed lanes of water known as the "Calles de Venezia,"

Streets of Venice. With luck, somebody may give you a day's pigeon shooting at little Limón; or you can go by boat to old Realejo, once a bustling port, and now imbued with the odd and rather intriguing atmosphere of the dead town. Grass grows in the streets, and a couple of hundred people live in the half-wrecked wooden houses that formerly sheltered a thousand families.

The train to the interior starts early in the morning; but all Corinto rises about dawn, lives by the movements of trains and steamers, and visitors miss neither. When you are on your way out from this port, be glad once more that the amenities of a wharf are here, and remember Corinto kindly.

From Corinto the train runs to León in about two and a half hours. Leaving behind the Pacific rollers, the casual little wooden houses of Corinto that string out along the track, the fringe of coco-nuts and mangrove, the line presently crosses a salt-extracting ground of very ancient origin, and at Paso de Caballos bridges an inlet of the sea.

From this point onwards the mainland is traversed, dusty and dry, but of a fertility plainly enough displayed by the fields of magnificent sugar-cane surging like bright green waves on both sides of the line. Not even coffee and the citrus fruits are more sturdily naturalized in Central America than this child of Southern Asia, brought in by the Spaniards about the middle of the sixteenth century. Chinandega, a big and busy Indian town, hot and bright, is passed, and at about an hour's run from Corinto, and near the old Indian town of Chichigalpa, is the famous San Antonio sugar estate, the largest in Central America. It is well worth a visit. There is a little branch line which in a quarter of an hour brings one to the station of San Antonio, where are the head-quarters of the estate, Managers' and guest houses, offices, etc. This is a township in miniature, well-organized, busy, peaceful, contented.

The great property of 11,000 acres, with about 2,000 acres planted to cane, lies on flat and slightly rolling ground, surrounded by light woodland; all new planting is done after May or June, when the five months' rains begin, and the first

cutting can be made six months after planting. In an ideal sugar-cane country such as Nicaragua annual replanting is not dreamed of: gaps are filled, but the root-stock sends up ratoons every year after cutting for at least five years, frequently for ten; I have seen many a sugar field in Nicaragua that had not been replanted for twenty years. No fertilizers are used. Machinery which remains a mystery to a layman turns out beautiful white crystallized sugar in a surprisingly short space of time, and when there is a surplus from Nicaragua's own demands a market is found as far north as Vancouver. I liked the fresh and sunny atmosphere of San Antonio, and observed with pleasure the neat cottages of the Nicaraguan labourers, each with a bunch of hibiscus bushes and a few banana plants at the door. In the cutting and crushing season, when loads of cane run on the plantation line day and night to the door of the busy mill, and the scent of sugar juice fills the air, a sugar plantation seems definitely and agreeably removed from the excitements of politics; and yet it isn't altogether.

Beyond San Antonio the fine level country runs clear away to the skirts of the superb volcanic cone of Chinandega; his head is scored and scarred, but he has been silent for many a year. Where the land is uncultivated, and the plough is used all too little in Nicaragua, pretty woods jostle up to the railway's edge, offering flowers. Here are the glowing red and orange spikes of the *mulato*, the pink bouquets of *matiliscuate*, the fine wide-cast plumes of the *guanacaste* and the clear pale green of *genisato*. At many a little station are piles of hardwoods—mahogany, cocabola, ceiba, and cedar.

León receives the visitor kindly; cabmen clamour for you and your luggage, and the successful caballero drives off, cutting cheerfully with his long whip at all the other applicants. With a huge cigar between his teeth and a gay shout he steers through the cobbled streets, streets that still possess the mediæval dip in the middle which serves quite efficiently as a gutter, but which is better suited to the rider of a horse than the sufferer in an open carriage. However, the hotel, a rather gloomy building in a narrow main street, is not far away, and the sights of León are close at hand.

In colonial days León was of greater importance than to-day; it was founded at the same time as Granada, but was chosen as the seat of the Governor, and here came the first Bishop of Nicaragua, in 1532, Diego Alvarez de Osorio, a disciple of Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, "Protector of the Indians," who came to León for the bishop's installation, and founded the Dominican convent. The centre of a rich plantation region, with plenty of humble native folk to perform all the hard work, León prospered; Gage, writing of conditions about 1630, remarked with astonishment their contentment:

"This City of Leon is very curiously built, for the chief delight of the inhabitants consists in their houses, and in the pleasure of the country adjoining, and in the abundance of all things for the life of man, more than in extraordinary riches, which there are not so much enjoyed as in other parts of America. They are content with fine gardens, with variety of singing birds, and parrets, with plenty of fish and flesh, which is cheap, and with gay houses, and so lead a delicious, lazy and idle life, not aspiring much to trade and traffique."

As indeed they did not, for this was the centre of official and religious life, and of learning; its College of San Ramón was founded in 1675. The peace of León was eventually broken by squabbles with Granada for political ascendency after Independence, and when this rivalry was ended by the erection of Managua as capital, León found itself chiefly important as the outlet for the mines of San Francisco, and a point of transference for the coffee of Matagalpa, away in the northern mountains.

León cathedral fronts one side of the plaza, according to custom, but the lions of Castile are disfigured by posters announcing a visiting circus. The façade, with its stucco ornaments, has a neglected air, but the pile is big and solid, and inside is a wide, empty space that is reposeful. There is an agreeable absence of the trifling over-ornamentation sometimes seen in Latin America, but one misses the dimness and richness of such interiors as that of Guatemala cathedral, as it was before the earthquakes of 1917–18. The large paintings on the bare walls are conspicuous rather than meritorious, and the statues of the twelve apostles ranged down the sides of the nave do not attract a second glance. To see the price-

less set of emeralds which everyone says are kept securely in the cathedral, and taken out for the adornment of the statue of the Virgin upon festal occasions, it is necessary to ask the permission of the Bishop—that active and pleasant-faced prelate whom one often used to meet, when I was last in León, jogging along upon his noble mule to and from his fine hacienda a few miles outside the city.

León has been famous, ever since Independence, as the chief stronghold of Liberalism, or, to give the word its most conspicuous interpretation in Central America, anti-clericalism, with attachment to the idea of a Federalized form of government for the five republics frequently added; this in opposition to Conservatism, allied to the Church, and, at least in the earlier years of independence when the question was acute, generally against Federalism. That issue has been moribund for so long, with only spasmodic revivals, that it is to-day not much more than an academic problem; its latest manifestation occurred in 1921, and whatever faint chance Federated Central America had was lessened by the abstention of Costa Rica, always standing aloof from what she regards as an unnecessary complication, and of Nicaragua, because this course was more convenient to her American controllers. In ancient quarrels, while Granada was supported almost invariably by conservative Guatemala, León usually had the help of Honduras and Salvador; the Atlantic coast, of course, did not enter into consideration until Zelaya's day.

But despite the Liberalism of León, her old cobbled streets, flanked by thick-walled, silent, patio houses with their air of seclusion, display many churches—here is the Merced, the Asunción, San Juan, San Felipe; and the church of the Recolección, with its single tower and a façade covered with deep-cut stucco symbols: the sacred shirt, with, above it, the three dice with which the Roman soldiers cast lots; the dagger of St. Peter, the scourge, the cock, the Carpenter's tools, a palm leaf, a rope, a ladder, all elaborately arranged in lozenges; one encounters the same set of symbols arranged upon temporary crosses set up upon village greens, during the festal season, in many parts of Spanish and Portuguese America. All the León churches are shabby, their fronts peeling, their

furnishings visibly poor; in rather better condition is the Calvario, on the outskirts of the town, with its flight of steps; and the Guadalupe, on the way to the cemetery. This *Panteón*, with its long path of blue and white tiles running out all the way from the city, and its flower-decked monuments and shady trees, is, as a Leonesa said to me, "muy alegre," and in marked contrast to the neglected public park in the city, which was "muy triste"—very sad.

To the west of León is the Indian town of Subtiava, a place of mud walls, grass thatch, and quiet-moving, brown-skinned folk, not so much submissive as wary, after their 400 years of alien control. The chief excitements are the days of religious fiesta, when the road, all the way from Subtiava to León Cathedral, is carpeted with scented green pine-needles, with patterns beautifully elaborated with coloured flowers, for the ceremonial passing of those saints who have replaced ancient gods. It is true that the Indians have contributed blood to the alien Spanish race, learnt the alien tongue and faith; but much of the old stock remains, luckily strong and fertile, the backbone of Nicaragua; this element forms a guarantee of the future, but will not contribute to the kind of progress exemplified by invention or ready adoption of mechanisms. It is a basic, not a progressive, element. It was a Nicaraguan poet, Salomón de la Selva, calling these two towns Body and Soul, who wrote:

> Beside León Subtiava sprawls. It has
> No other colours but the green of trees,
> The grey of huts, the zinc of dusty grass.
> The Spanish city and the Indian lie,
> Unmindful of the tread of centuries,
> Unchangeable beneath the changeless sky.

And here let me give a word to that greatest of Central American poets, Rubén Darío, the man who used Spanish in a new and magic fashion that rendered his work famous not only in Spanish America but in Spain and France. Physically and intellectually, Darío was the heir of Indian and Spanish America, a son of the soil, embodiment of the aspirations of his race: and his tremendous speech, electrifying and inspiring, was hailed like the voice of a saviour.

His first important book of poems, the ever-renowned *Azúl*, was published in Chile, where he was a weigher in the custom-house of Valparaiso; and from that time until his death the Nicaraguense was the "arbitrary dictator of Latin American literature," as de la Selva says. "Whichever way he waved his flag the rest followed, not sheep-like, but like valiant warriors under magnificent captainship." Darío hated the politics that tore his country; and he hated worse the American invasion; his poem addressed to Roosevelt, after the "big fist" had been shown in Panama, has lost nothing of its fire with the passage of time. Darío's poems created a new school. Poets rose up all over Spanish America, and in the five countries between Mexico and Panama a few writers of the first water: Alfredo Guillén Zelaya, in Honduras; Arevalo Martinez in Guatemala; Ricardo Arenales in Salvador, and Saenz Morales in Nicaragua, are probably the most racy of the soil of Central America.

CHAPTER XIV

MANAGUA AND LOS PUEBLOS

Volcano of Momotombo—Volcanic Dust—The Lake—Parques—Hammocks and Beds—Museum—Market—Fruit—Tipitapa—Tiscapa—Birds—Railway between Managua and Granada—Masaya—Branch for "Los Pueblos"—Lake Apoyo—Diriamba and Jinotepe—Masatepe—Volcano of Masaya—Fray Blas and Governor Contreras.

FROM León the train takes one in four hours to Managua, passing on the way long stretches of flat grassy lands and light sunny woodland, with cultivated fields here and there. Nearing Managua there comes into view a volcanic range, with Momotombo set apart, an overtopping peak with a little wreath of smoke about his head, a wreath that is rosy and luminous at night. Momotombo seldom rouses from his sleep nowadays, but you may still see near Managua a flood of lava, like a river frozen in its flow, with the print of naked human feet upon it; those flying people were running towards the cool waters of the lake.

Just before the train reaches Managua, it passes one of the most beautiful crater lakes in the world, a jewel of a lake, deep set in its rocky ring. It is of a remarkable deep jade colour, and its name is Asososca.

Managua is the dustiest city in Central America, covered with the soft, fine, warm dust of the Pacific coast laden with volcanic ash. It lies thick in the streets, acting as a muffler of sound—and of sight, too, when a breeze blows across the lake, or traffic is lively. The side-paths, raised two or three feet above the dusty saucer of the road, are paved with tiles, in the more ambitious streets, but for many years the only signs of street-making effort were the cobbled slides, some six feet long, which break the transition from one level to another

as the highway rises and falls. The town mules and horses are perfectly accustomed to these inclined interruptions in the general welter of dust, as they are to the daily bonfires in the streets, Managua's excellent system by which each householder disposes of "garbage."

This is a new city, child of the eternal quarrels between old León and Granada, each able to claim ascendency from time to time as one party or another, after Independence, called it the Capital. Time was when these two cities came out to battle with each other; the stories of their conflicts are reminiscent of mediæval Italy, and the dispute was only settled in 1852, when Managua, then a sleepy agricultural community, almost half-way between the two rival cities, was made the seat of government as a compromise. Nicaragua was still at that time a member of the shadowy Federation of Central America, her ruler a "Director." Two years later she accepted the actual fact of her separate status as a republic and in another two years was plunged into the miseries of the Walker affair. It was not until after this attempt to create an American enclave of slave-holders in Central America had failed that Managua was able to array herself as a capital city; in the general wreck created by the filibusters both León and Granada suffered serious damage, and not a few citizens moved to Managua to make a new start on neutral ground.

The most cheerful sight in Managua is the lake itself, a sheet of water too big for intimate loveliness, but clean, clear and cool. With a breeze stirring eddies on the sandy shore, a scarlet and violet sunset behind Momotombo's ancient cone, blue hills dimly outlined on the farther side of the water, the lake has qualities; the margin is partly spoiled by the unkempt railway track, and the raw hump of the *parroquia*, now elevated to the dignity of a cathedral. This edifice is of mud bricks, like practically every other building in Managua, and is lined with wood, painted pale blue. It has the merit of being always open, and its large cool space is interrupted by no more than the quiet kneeling figure of some old woman wrapped in a black reboso, or a sleeping child. There is one notable monument:

"Al ilustre General Don José Dolores Estrada, vencedor en San

Jacinto. La batalla de S. Jacinto fue librada el 14 de Septiembre de 1856 contra la mas escogido de la fuerza filibustera de W. Walker y salvó la Independencia de Centro América."

A new sea-wall near by borders the Parque Infantil, a public playground for children, planted with green shrubs; a fifteen-foot shaft bears a rather nebulous inscription in Spanish, indicating that it was erected by the Liberal Government "to the memory of the most notable national events of the nineteenth century." Between the children's park and the main road is the older public garden, with big breadfruit and crotons and mimosas, kept free from the eternal red dust of Managua by constant spraying. There is a cool fountain, and a bandstand, and when the curly-haired Nicaraguan musicians play at night under the swinging electric lights, the youths and dark-eyed girls of Managua circle in a dual, slow promenade, the girls walking in one direction and the boys in the other, exchanging a soft, hasty word now and again. In well-to-do families the women may be seen in the cool of the evening, dressed and powdered and painted, rocking ceaselessly in cane rocking-chairs, in the salon giving on to the street with its iron-grilled windows low enough to allow a view to passers-by. But in the poorer houses, where the door opens right into the main part of the dwelling, it is the lord of the house who takes his ease, in the inevitable hammock, hung between back and front doors to catch the breeze, with the inevitable cigarette in his mouth.

These Nicaraguan hammocks, by the way, are worth buying, but they are not cheap. I have one which, with its end-ornaments and tassels, is over twenty-five feet long; it is made of the finest silky pita fibre, striped with beautiful blue, and is really meant for a whole family. The hammock habitué of course does not lie along the length, but crosswise, stretching open the immense folds which otherwise would envelop him; and, taking into consideration the strange quality of Nicaraguan beds, the sooner the traveller learns to use a hammock the better for his chances of sound sleep. In what was alleged to be the best hotel in Managua I was, upon my first visit, offered a bed which had a moss-mattress, a couple of inches thick, modestly placed upon a board frame. The hammock to which

I exchanged, after an hour's experiment, did not save me from the mosquitoes, but it was at least elastic.

This hotel charged the equivalent of an English pound per day, and made the revolution the ready excuse for giving guests no edible meals; and once more I found in Central America that the foreign-managed hotel charges for its dignity, while its humbler brother, which does not pretend to serve filleted steak, will not only feed you but gives the traveller an amusing insight into the life of the country. Next time you pass through Panama, go to almost any native hotel in Colón instead of the pretentious cement erection of the new Washington in Cristóbal, and you will realize this truth. Personally I would rather risk my life in an encounter with tortillas and a hot pimiento ragout than face the dull, intrenched safety of "canned goods."

To return to Managua. With luck, you may not only hit upon the day and hour when the Museum is nominally open, but the guardian may also be there with the key; usually, one is unfortunate enough to find that it is in the pocket of someone who has fever or has gone to Corinto. But, if you are looking for antiquities of the pre-Spanish days, you will be disappointed with the lack of order and proper labelling. There are some stone figures, of the crude but interesting Nicaraguan type, generally made of softish, rough volcanic stone; there is some pottery, not to be compared in beauty of shape or decoration with the Guetar, Chiriqui and Nicoyan vases, but which has its place in Central American history. Undoubtedly, the Nahuatl-speaking enclave which old Nicarao ruled had its arts of excellence—for even to-day, after centuries of superimposed ideas, the weavers of pita fibre and the carvers of the fine jicaras of the Rivas region are admirable artisans.

The market in Managua—and this is true of León and Granada also—is chiefly memorable for woven articles, basketwork, and carved gourds and for the superb quality of Nicaraguan fruit. The nisperos and mameys, grenadillas and mangoes, oranges and pine-apples, are the biggest, juiciest and sweetest of all Central America.

There are some respectable shops in Managua, almost

invariably financed and managed by foreigners ; and a number of two-story, well-built, balconied private dwellings, of which the most imposing was that built by President Zelaya for family use ; it was taken for the use of Nicaraguan presidents after 1912, when American Marines housed themselves in the official residence, the Campo de Marte or National Palace. Another fine house belonging to the family of the historian Gamez was later used as an American legation.

Outside the town are four or five delightful rides. Follow the shore of the lake to the east, through a lane shaded with the branches of interlaced trees, and in twelve miles one arrives at the village of Tipitapa, where the River Tipitapa pours out the waters of Managua, by a swift channel broken by a cascade, into Lake Nicaragua, and a ferry will take you to the road leading north of the lake. All this region is charming, with its little estates, and fertile fields of corn and cane ; and at the village you may take a bath of medicinal waters. Then there are the famous sulphurous mud baths of little Lake Nejapa, some five miles from Managua ; the Indians of the neighbourhood have implicit faith in its curative effects, and I dare say this mud is just as good as that of any European spa. But I had not the courage to try it.

On no account miss a sight of Lake Tiscapa. It lies only a few miles from Managua—half an hour's driving or riding —along a sunny road thick with fine red sand. Where this path suddenly dips one catches sight of a deep crater lake, at least 200 feet below. The water is crystalline, still, and of a pale green : a winding path descends to the margin, where groups of women are washing clothes, for the water is wonderfully pure and soft, and clothes laved herein become snow-white. The Indian women of this region have probably washed their garments in Tiscapa for hundreds of years.

On the opposite rim of the crater, rising sheer from the lake, is perched a fort, La Loma ; on the farther side the fort's other eye looks down upon the city of Managua.

Traversing these lanes about Managua the traveller notes the tremendous number of birds haunting trees and bushes, and boldly following horse or pedestrian along the paths. Perhaps they are bold because all Nicaraguans love little

animals. No family party in the train is complete unless father, mother, one of the fourteen children or the maids, carries a pair of the tiny grass-green parroquets that are here called chocollitos; these chattering bits of green fluff will sit happily on a stick or a friendly shoulder for a day's journey. They do not talk, although inquisitive and intelligent; but many of the green Central American parrots are excellent talkers, as good as their cousins of South America which, taught Indian speech, were in pre-Spanish days sacrificed to the gods, in the hope that the gods would mistake the talking birds for human beings and be satisfied.

I used to know a parrot living in an hotel in Managua whose speech was so clear and free that police inquiries were made about his remarks. It was not his cajolings of petticoats—"Entre, muchachas!" (Come in, girls) uttered in a wheedling voice, that earned official frowns, but his sudden hoarse whisper in your ear from a hanging orchid: "Muere Chamorro! Muere Chamorro! Vivo el partido liberal!"

In the same patio dwelt one of the heron tribe whose evening hymn was astounding. As the sun sank he grew restless, until, taking his stand by the fountain, he would lift his long bill to the glowing sky and utter a strange, rapid succession of cries. The pitch was at first quite low, rising gradually and increasing in speed until the quick, pulsating, elfish ululations poured out in shrieks far above any note a human voice could reach. With the setting of the sun he would drop his head, fall silent, and remain dumb for another twenty-four hours.

The line between Managua and Granada is a curving track connecting the south-east end of the smaller lake to the north-west of the larger: it runs more or less parallel to the connecting river Tipitapa. Here is an old populated region, where the towns are still predominantly "Indian." Nindiri is hot and casual, but Masaya, like Chinandega, is always busy and amusing. The railway station hums with life, and if the bold and smiling sellers of jicaras full of tiste (carved gourds, used as drinking vessels for various native drinks, with sugar, chocolate powder, and some aromatic spice as the most usual base), of mangoes and nisperos and oranges and endless other things,

are not now allowed to enter the railway cars and push a snarling baby raccoon or a pile of sticky sweetmeat into your face, you can alight and sample these wares for yourself. I can resist the pink and brown drinks, and the live animals, and tortillas and beans, and I refuse the pairs of tiny green parroquets, although my heart is wax to them, but I am invariably the victim of the seller of fine carved calabashes and of small bits of pottery. Both Masaya and Chinandega offer the little black clay ducks, polished, formed as whistles, that have certainly been made in this way for centuries.

At Masaya is the branch line for "Los Pueblos"—the towns: that is, the old Indian centres once ruled by tribal chieftains. This is one of the prettiest, most sweetly dappled-sunny, lightly-wooded, daintily-indented regions of Nicaragua, well worth a visit. From Masaya the line runs south, turning and twisting among the hills; just before the station of Catarina is reached the line runs past a perfect jewel of a crater lake, a pure bright blue cup, set in a rim of hills the colour of copperas. This is Lake Apoyo. Over its farthermost rim the green country flows down and away to a white city set amongst dark trees, distant Granada, and beyond the flat-roofed, smokeless houses lies the pale and sparkling water of Lake Nicaragua. It looks like a sea, and well it may, for it covers more than 5,000 square miles.

Apoyo's interior sides are sheer rock, almost bare; there is no bush or water-plant about the margin. It is salt, no stream flows in, and there is no known outlet. Like many another crater lake, it is the object of a certain superstition, and no one bathes in it; if you went in to its centre, you could never get out again! But it is astonishingly lovely. Here is Saratoga station, with a glimpse of crumpled mountains, abrupt, but saved from violence by their green draperies. A Swiss chalet perches on the top of a near-by hill. The railway is now in the spurs of the coastal range, of no great height, but delightful in climate and scenery; listen to the liquid Indian names, luckily surviving . . . Niquinomo, Masatepe, Jinotepe, Diriamba, Nandaime.

Jinotepe is the biggest, Diriamba the last, of the towns threaded by the railway; Diriamba is a delicious nook in

COFFEE IN BLOOM

the hills, Jinotepe a place of pride and importance, the head of this coffee region ; but I like best little careless, lazy, sprawling Masatepe. The line runs through groves of coffee-trees to reach this town, and in April and May all the little horizontal branches are covered with masses of snowy, waxen stars, heavily perfumed ; the air is shot with sunlight, full of scent and the hum of bees—the inoffensive bees of Central America that never seek to attack—stealing honey from the coffee flowers and from the rose-coloured blooms of the *madre de café*. From the station Masatepe runs in a long street, where low-built adobe houses, washed with some light tint, stand with doors and windows wide open, in the middle of gardens full of fruit and flowers. Enormous orange-trees, lime-trees, mangoes, and the queer straight-spread branches of the round-leaved calabash-tree, with its shiny green globes of fruit, shade the houses. Past the Church, with its broad exterior platform ascended from long lines of shallow steps on three sides, is the hotel, where every one sits on rocking-chairs on the sunny veranda and an agreeable neighbourliness prevails. This is, in fact, a friendly summer resort for Granada, for down in a dip of green are famous medicinal baths.

Back in Masaya, you may with good horses ascend the now extinct volcano of Masaya. I have never made this ascent, but the most entertaining story about it can be read without trouble in the "Historia de Nicaragua" of Gamez the Nicaraguan writer. Briefly, in 1538 an intrepid Spaniard, a Friar of the Franciscan cloister in Granada, ascended the volcano, looked down into the incandescent crater, became convinced that the molten lava was actually liquid gold, and in April, 1538, induced four friends to accompany him in an attempt to fetch some of the gold to the surface. They took an elaborate equipment of pulleys, cross-beams, ropes, buckets, set up their apparatus, and next day, after Fray Blas had said mass and put an iron helmet upon his head, he was lowered to a rocky ledge 250 yards from the top. The heat was terrific, sulphurous fumes nearly choked him, but the friar took a holy cross in one hand, a hammer in the other, and chipped fragments of the rock. But when his friends drew him up, the scraps showed no trace of gold ; so they tried again a few

days later, followed by an inquisitive crowd from Granada, who insisted upon sharing the expedition. Three volunteers were allowed to descend with Fray Blas this time. They took food, water, had themselves lowered from the beam across the crater, and at night, by light of the glow from volcanic fires and guided by a comrade signalling from the cross-beam, lowered a bucket by a stout chain, and got up a mass of black lava which was at once pronounced to be silver.

These exciting results could not be withheld from Governor Contreras, who had a short way with discoverers, and next week the Governor with his staff also rode out from Granada to the scene. Again Fray Blas and a party of volunteers descended to the smoke-tormented ledge, sending up more samples of the lava, and bits of rock; but when these were shown, everybody began to laugh, and Contreras ordered the friar and his companions to come to the top, which they did after each had carefully selected a "vein." Experts in Granada declared the specimens worthless, and Contreras forbade any future adventures in Masaya's crater.

Masaya has a fine head, but more curiously rugged are the heads of Chichigalpa and Chinandega; the most destructive of Nicaragua's volcanoes is Coseguina, which you see on a spur jutting into the waters of the Gulf of Fonseca; it is no more than 4,000 feet high, but in 1835 the eruptions were so violent that ashes are said to have fallen as far north as Mexico, south to Colombia and east to Jamaica, while towns in Nicaragua were darkened for two days by the tremendous masses of smoke. To-day, although Granada and many other towns feel *temblores* now and again, there are few signs of activity beyond the wisp of smoke, the nightly glow, that hovers about Momotombo's pointed head.

CHAPTER XV

THE GRANADA REGION: CITY, LAKE AND RIVER

Foundation of Granada—Islands in the Lake—Early Settlers and the Desaguadero—Early Explorers of the River—Ruy Diaz, Martin Estete, Calero and Machuca—Calero and Dr. Robles—Pirates on the River—San Carlos Fort—English Attacks—Granada and Walker's Filibusters—San Francisco Church—The *Victoria*—Bound for San Jorge—San Ubaldo—Moyagalpa—San Jorge—Rivas.

GRANADA sits beautifully above the shelving shore of Lake Nicaragua, full of sun, shaded with glorious trees, under the lee of the enormous green and purple shoulder of Mombacho volcano. When Hernan de Córdoba laid out this city, appointing its officials with due Spanish attention to law and order, he built the Church of San Francisco, and a little fort to control the lake whose remains are still traceable. At that time the lake border was clustered with Indian villages, and the island of Omotepe, whose twin peaks show, the colour of a harebell, from the lake, as well as the groups called Solentiname and Zapatero, were thickly inhabited. Extremely interesting specimens of pottery, carved stone (including large figures or statues carved in the round) beads, and weapons have been found on these islands, showing the influence of Chorotega and Maya, but the native tribes of the lake region have long since disappeared.

The story of the agreeable, golden visit of Gil Gonzalez, first Spaniard to see the great Lake Cosibolca, is told on other pages; it was not a difficult matter for Hernan de Córdoba, following in his footsteps in 1522, to overwhelm the Indians, thickly settled on the edges of both lakes and to found two towns—Granada, not far from the wide-sprawled settlement

of Galtera, on the edge of Lake Nicaragua (or Granada, or Cosibolca), and León, first planted nearer the western edge of Lake Managua, not far from the Indian village of Momotombo. León was afterwards moved, on account of the volcano's activity, to its present site, farther from the lake, near the Indian town of Subtiava. These cities, and the still strong Indian centre of Chinandega, were on the travelled high road kept open by the authorities in Guatemala, from Santiago de Guatemala to Cartago in Costa Rica, via Salvador, San Miguel and Fonseca Bay; they flourished with plenty of Indians to tend the plantations of cacao and indigo, and Negroes for the flocks and herds. It was the "fairest jewel in the Spanish crown," and "Mahomet's Paradise"; even the critical Benzoni, here in 1550, admits that it was "fertile and delightful," producing quantities of wax, honey, balsam, cotton and many fruits; he says that there were in his day not more than eighty houses (of Spaniards) in León and Granada together, some built of wood and some of bricks. These settlers were, however, active folk: we find them in 1544 writing (official letter from the Cabildo of Granada) to beg the King to send them fifty Negroes to clear the cataracts of the Desaguadero (San Juan River), so that larger ships could sail from the Atlantic to the great Lake without difficulty. This same letter complains to the King that Contreras the Governor took all the best lands for himself, his wife, children or "paniaguados" (protegés), flourishing on the "sweat of the unhappy Conquistadores and settlers who with their offspring are dying of hunger." This grievance led to a definite demand:

> "There are in this land noblemen (*hijosdalgo*—'sons of somebody') and men who have greatly served your Majesty, poor and necessitous, and who possess a number of natural children here; and as their fathers have no property to leave them, and they would be lost and would turn to the vices and customs of the Indians, and this would be a cause of the loss of the souls of these unfortunate little ones,"

the Cabildo begs that encomiendas of Indians shall be secured to these children as an inheritance. "This is one of the most notable charities that your Majesty could perform in all the world," piously suggests the letter, and if the mixed-bloods

did not get their mothers' families for slaves, it was not the fault of the Town Council.

From Granada went out three expeditions, trying to follow the lake's outflow, before it was discovered that it led to the Atlantic. The chief Nicarao had told Gil Gonzalez de Avila about the river, in 1522, and the Spanish King, always obsessed with the idea of finding an inter-oceanic waterway, ordered investigations to be made. Hernandez de Córdoba sent Ruy Diaz to explore, but although this captain managed to cross the squally lake and reach the tributary Toro, he then returned; next, Hernan de Soto was charged with the exploration, but he too came back when the raging Toro was sighted; third, went Martin Estete, who made a wonderful journey—by water as far as the Pocosol, and then by land on the right bank of the river as far as the marshes of Tortuguero (now Costa Rican territory), but his large expedition of 150 Spaniards and some hundreds of Indians was barred from the coast by hostile tribes.

In 1539 the successful expedition of Captains Alonso Calero and Diego Machuca de Suazo set out; they left Granada in April, carrying, in a big ship, horses, cows, pigs and supplies of grain and wine; they had two rowing-boats and a couple of canoes, and took a well-armed force of Spaniards and Indians. They crossed the lake, exploring islands, reached the river in three weeks and passed the Toro; here Machuca landed with his company, thenceforth marching on the left bank and keeping for some time in touch with the river party. Calero passed the Casa del Diablo, Sabalos and Pocosol, and waited here for Machuca, but vainly; he was never to see his comrade again for over a year.

For Machuca, turning north and north-west, had begun one of the terrible and wellnigh incredible marches with which the period of Spanish discovery is threaded. His exact route is unknown; but he actually penetrated through forest, over mountain spurs and across rivers, to the frontier of what is Honduras to-day, the margin of the River Wanks. From here he made his way back to Granada, and finding that Calero had not returned, took boats and went right down the river to the sea, coasting up and down until he heard that his

comrade was a prisoner in Nombre de Dios (Panama), when he turned about, up the river again, and back to Granada to induce the Governor Contreras to act.

Calero, meanwhile, had reached the Atlantic. It seemed to be a lake, for land almost surrounds the haven where Greytown stands to-day, but Calero guessed the truth, and went coasting north to try to find Machuca. He reached the mouth of the Wanks (Coco, Yare), sent expeditions up its waters, one of which found the tracks of the horses of Machuca, but was forced to return without finding him. His expedition was decimated with sickness and starvation, for the Indian towns of the river banks had been chiefly abandoned, yielding little either in food or gold. They ate crabs, roots, the leaves of bushes, suffered shipwreck; and, at the end of their strength, suddenly beheld upon the horizon the white sails of a distant ship. Calero was confirmed in his conviction that this was the Atlantic coast, the "Sea of the North." It was best, therefore, he told his men, that they should sail south to Nombre de Dios, some eighty miles away; for if they tried to ascend the river to Granada they lacked arms with which to row, and feet with which to march by land. "Let us commit ourselves to the care of God," said the Captain, "so that He may conduct us with His winds. For in no other way can we arrive to any place."

So, fixing sails in the little *San Juan* (a name thenceforward given to the river) they steered south; the survivors reached Zorobaró Islands, found snails and birds to stay their hunger, and presently arrived at Nombre de Dios, and told their tale. Dr. Robles, Governor of Panama and one of the Oidores of the Audiencia, electrified with the idea of golden coasts, the old will-of-the-wisp of Columbus still dancing before him, determined to keep the discovery in the family, and to send his son-in-law, Hernan Sanchez de Badajoz, to take possession of the new lands; so he seized Calero's boat, trumped up a charge against the captain, and would have hanged him had he not sought sanctuary at the altar of San Francisco Church, where not even an Oidor could lay hands upon him.

From this spot of safety, fed by sympathizers, Calero managed to smuggle a letter to the King of Spain, telling of his discover-

ies; and in June, 1540, a royal order came to Panama for the release of Calero and his men, the return of their boat and gold, and authority for the captain to continue his exploration of the river. Dr. Robles had already sent his son-in-law to Almirante Bay, and thought his plans secure; so he let Calero go, and this intrepid explorer, setting his face north, sailed up the coast, beyond Veragua, to the mouth of the San Juan, and up the river; half-way up, he met a big expedition coming down—the Governor Rodrigo de Contreras himself, and a force equipped to turn Sanchez de Badajoz out of his Marbella fort on Almirante Bay; Captain Machuca accompanied this expedition, and one wonders what words he and his comrade exchanged, before another blow fell. The Governor, seeing in Calero a too valiant claimant to the river discoveries, which he himself now intended to claim, picked a quarrel with Calero, arrested him, and sent him as a prisoner to Granada, where he lay in jail for three years. It is pleasant to know that he survived this scandalous treatment; a document discovered by the learned Peralta of Costa Rica shows that in 1545 Captain Machuca applied to Audiencia de los Confines, asking for himself and his friend Alonso Calero the Governorship of Costa Rica. The fact that they could not get it perhaps shows that luck had turned in the favour of these gallant first European discoverers of the San Juan River.

From that time the river became a great commercial highway. It was kept reasonably free, and clear to Granada came Spanish vessels, laden with cloth and wines and iron and weapons, and taking back sugar and tobacco for Spain, via the yearly Panama market. This and the Golfo Dulce in Guatemala, and the road across the Isthmus of Panama were the great outlets of colonial traffic, but there was also commerce from León by way of the Pacific port of Realejo, on an inlet near the present Corinto. At León lived the Governor, controlling the group of towns all about the great lakes, but making no attempt to govern or colonize the long expanses of the Caribbean coast that afterwards rose to fame as Mosquitia. The only visitors to those rivers, forests and lagoons where wild tribes wandered, naked, using the bow and arrow and practically still living in the Stone Age, were the hardy buc-

caneers who applied the theory of "annoying the Spanish King in his Indies" by looting and burning such rich American colonies as they could reach. Spain had, actually, very few years of peace. Of the English raiders alone there was a long list: Sir Francis Drake, carrying letters of marque from Queen Elizabeth, and therefore no corsair but a licensed captain, was off the Caribbean coast as early as 1572, seizing the mule-train from Panama in April, 1573, loaded with pearls, silver and gold; Oxenham was on the Isthmus a year later, assisted, as Drake had been, by the runaway Negroes ("Cimarrones" or Cimaroons) who allied themselves to the native tribes against the Spanish. Drake was back again in 1594, after the expedition of Hawkins in 1593; Parker came in 1601. Fifty years later Admiral Penn's capture of Jamaica gave the sea-rovers an invaluable place for preparation and retreat, enabling Morgan to achieve his raids in 1668, with the crowning exasperation of the sack and burning of Panama City. In the 'seventies and 'eighties came Sharp, Sawkins, Dampier and Coxon, ranging up and down between Chile and Mexico; most of these were disavowed adventurers, but with definite war between England and Spain once more in 1740 came Admiral Vernon to Caribbean waters. Not only was Spain intermittently at loggerheads with the English during the 300 years of her colonial empire in the Americas, but with France and Holland as well, these countries contributing freebooters for the same purposes as the British raiders of ships and cities; and logwood cutters; the smugglers bringing European goods were frequently by no means unwelcome in colonies whose foreign trade was restricted to one city of Spain, carried by ships once a year. Spain was not the tyrant that Spanish-American school books, written since Independence, declare; her government was meticulous and extraordinarily painstaking, setting high standards in honour and justice; but in attempting to regulate production, so that the Americas should supply a definite range of merchandise peculiar to her soil, she sometimes made rules that annoyed the settlers and appear narrow—as when, in 1600, a ferment was produced in Granada by an order forbidding the cultivation of grapes and olives; but on the other hand it was also forbidden to grow purely American

products, such as tobacco and cacao, in Spain. These rules could be and were easily enforced in Spain, but were frequently evaded overseas, where the interest of the officials was effectively aided by great spaces.

Nicaragua's serious cause of complaint was non-protection against pirates, for unlike Mexico, Guatemala and Cartago and Comayagua and Salvador, interior, high-placed cities, her chief towns lay exposed at low level. Raiders could and did ascend the San Juan River: Granada was looted in 1665, to the intense chagrin of the citizens, by the Dutch pirate Davis. The Granadinos had long been warned of his coming, and the Alcalde armed and drilled a volunteer force; but, a nervous man, he rang the great bell of summons so many times without due cause that at last the townsfolk got from the Governor, safe in León, an order that the bell must not be rung again without his permission. So, when the Dutch boats appeared in the lake the Governor had to send a rider galloping post-haste to León for a permit, and while the bell remained silent and the citizens slept, Davis landed and sacked the town.

After this contretemps the Granadinos threatened to abandon the city, and to appease them the Spanish Government erected and munitioned and garrisoned the fort of San Carlos, at the junction of lake and river. The fort of the Immaculate Conception, known now as the Castillo Viejo, stands farther down, near the junction of the San Juan with the Santa Cruz River. These defences thwarted the pirates so far as Granada was concerned, but these irrepressibles went north, to the river which is variously known as the Wanks or Yare or Coco, and raided Segovia; and to the Kurringwas, lying in wait for provision boats from Matagalpa; these interior regions are not only well supplied with fruits and cattle and grain, but lead to gold mines. In 1685 Dampier's raiders appeared on the Pacific and harried León by way of Realejo.

In 1762, with England and Spain at war, the Governor of Jamaica took a hand and sent boats up the San Juan; Nicaragua never forgets that the Castillo Viejo was defended with great courage by a Spanish girl, Rafaela Herrera, whose father, the Commandant, died before the attack began. The water-

way across the continent was attracting international attention, and again the English came up the river, not only with the idea of attacking a vulnerable part of the Spanish colonies, but, probably, because the idea of the construction of a great canal from sea to sea, utilizing river and lakes appeared feasible, to England; a secret expedition of two English army officers, Hodgson and Lee, in 1779, had laid detailed maps of river, lake and coast before the Lords of the Admiralty. Early in 1780 an English fleet appeared off the Caribbean coast, but only one vessel, the small *Hinchinbrook*, was able to cross the bar at the mouth of the San Juan and negotiate the river as far as Castillo Viejo; the fort capitulated in April, 1780, and was held for six months, when sickness had weakened the small force badly, and they returned to the mouth. With the attackers was Nelson, then a youth of 22; in many Nicaraguan histories it is written that Nelson lost his eye at Castillo Viejo, but actually this injury did not take place until the reduction of Calvi in Corsica in 1794.

Granada still wears an air of leisure, of dignity and wealth, although her proud status as chief commercial city of the Atlantic route passed when the San Juan River no longer carried the great bulk of Nicaraguan trade. The great ships that formerly sailed the river and lake are gone; the river-bed has risen, cataracts multiplied, and the mouth has become a swampy delta. With the railway taking traffic in the other direction, all motive to keep the river clear has vanished. The buildings of Granada, too, are not those of the city's former state, for a great part of the city was burnt by Walker's men in 1856; part of his forces took possession of Guadalupe Church, whose walls, battered and roofless, still stand, until reinforcements helped them to escape; a stake was left upon the lake shore with a jibe, "Here was Granada," written upon a scrap of paper. But Granada rose from the ashes and rebuilt her spacious houses, cool and sweet with their big ferny patios. There is no better public market in Nicaragua than this; it is finely built, as stately as a church, and is full of huge piles of luscious fruit. The hotel upon the wide central plaza, with its splendid trees, has large, cool rooms

for whose space and balconies you are grateful in the heat of midday, and the Granadinos have a pleasant habit of walking about the gardens in the turquoise evening, and up and down the mango-shaded path to the lake, with the family-friendliness of an ancient city where everybody's interests are united and ideas firmly established by the place of their birth. To say that there is "strong local feeling" in Granada is putting it too gently; but if there are more kindly, courteous, genially hospitable, more genuine exponents of *hidalguia* than these old families of Nicaragua, I have yet to meet them. Many are owners of cacao and sugar estates a few miles from the town.

There are, as I said above, few entire buildings of the old Spanish times left in Granada; the great cathedral and the old Church of San Francisco, with its enormous exterior platform, ascended by immensely broad stone steps, are little more than shells, their rich interior trappings lost at one period of trouble or another. But it is to-day, as when Gage saw it nearly 300 years ago, "stately and pleasant"; there is a sense of contentment, no doubt due in great measure to the gracious situation of the old city.

Upon one soft and sunny morning in Granada I saw, tied up to the little pier, the famous flat-bottomed steamer *Victoria*. This vessel has been in every revolution during the previous twenty years, and could proudly display, in proof, the bullet-holes made at the time when Don Fulano de Tal, later a President, took the vessel single-handed, sailed her about the lake for two months, and only gave her up when provisions ran short.

It occurred to me that the *Victoria* was due to run east to San Jorge, that San Jorge is the port for Rivas, that Rivas is the modern name for the land of old Nicarao the tribal chief who met and talked to the first Spaniards, and that in addition to its very ancient fame Rivas was on the route for the long-talked-of Nicaraguan Canal, had played a part in that tragi-comedy, the Walker affair, and was famous for its supremely delicious cacao, and for strange herbs and witchcraft.

I walked down that noble double avenue of mango-trees, with its raised and paved path in the middle, leading down to the water's edge, and asked the steamer agent, lounging

on the pier, how long that trip to San Jorge would take. A couple of hours, said he; the fare was a matter of just so few bits of money—something like half a crown, I think. From San Jorge the *Victoria* would run across the lake to San Ubaldo, the port for the English mines, and to Moyagalpa, on the island of Omotepe, back to San Jorge next day, and then back to Granada. Thus, you observe, I could spend a night in Rivas and return on the following day. Excellent! I planned to get a horse and ride along the canal route to San Juan del Sur and, so thinking, paid my money and stepped aboard. At this moment supervened a small commotion on the pier, and a Nicaraguan lady (trailing flounced skirt, black braids down her back, no hat, but a reboso) approached the gangway, followed by servants with two pillows, a few green parroquets, a tin trunk painted with flowers, and a large basket of oranges and mangoes. There were also several youths dressed in cotton suits apparently made in the dark by their sisters; their hair was in Nicaraguan fashion, combed out violently to project at the back. In the intervals of smoking cigarettes they embraced the lady repeatedly, and I knew that a family parting was at hand. I had no premonition of its effect upon me.

Presently the *Victoria* cast off, and a few minutes later we were called downstairs to breakfast, this being eleven o'clock in the morning and time for *almuerzo*, everybody having had *desayuno*, coffee and a roll, somewhere about seven. Almuerzo on the *Victoria* consisted chiefly of stewed black beans and baked plantains, plus oranges and coffee, but this suits this traveller very well, and I did not seek the deck for perhaps half an hour. It then struck me that we were running north-west from Granada instead of due east, and I remarked upon this to a young woman, who turned out to be the captain's wife. She agreed. Yes, the lady who had come aboard at the last moment wanted to go to a certain estate up a river in the north-west corner of the lake. And for that point we were headed.

Some time in the afternoon we arrived off the mouth of the aforesaid river, but, contrary to expectation, the lady's husband had not sent a row-boat to meet her. So of course the

captain lent her a ship's boat and a couple of men, and off they went, round a green bend of forest. When at long last the boat returned, the captain said that as we were so far north we might as well go on to San Ubaldo now, and, after the sun sank punctually at six o'clock, we moved off to run along the north of the lake. Another meal—that is, more rice, beans and plantains—and we were still crawling cautiously along in the pitch-black night. Between ten and eleven o'clock, lights came into view, and we tied up at the narrow wooden pier of San Ubaldo. I walked with a casual acquaintance along the pier, towards a camp fire on shore where four or five people were sitting, and found myself listening to a conversation.

"You're wrong, my dear fellow. It couldn't be on that side of Piccadilly, because——"

They saw me and rose, offered their steaming coffee; they were the English engineers from the interior mines, come down to the port to meet their chemicals. At midnight I sat with the most informing upon the pier, and he recited to me the words of that immortal poem well and scandalously known to all the Caribbean, the poem including the lines . . . "home of the wailing burro and the all-abounding flea, Mañana, gracias á Dios, I bid farewell to thee." Somewhere about one o'clock we sailed again, and then the storm came. The *Victoria*, veteran of many gales, shivered in her track; the squalls took her, tore her from her flat seat upon the waves, stood her on end and shook her, and threw her back with a thud. There were two alleged cabins, actually little wooden huts erected on the deck, occupied respectively by the wife of the captain and myself—the furniture consisting of a canvas cot. I pulled the cot outside and sat upon it, preferring to drown in the open, if the *Victoria* must go down, as seemed probable. But at the crack of dawn we arrived off the island of Omotepe, with its twin peaks softly blue, and the village of Moyagalpa snuggling on the green shore. The captain's wife got off here, and there was quite a family scene again; so that the sun was high before we started off again, actually headed for San Jorge. Here, after a few more meals, we arrived about midday in terrific heat.

San Jorge is a shaky little wooden pier (on which squat brown, smiling women who want to sell beautifully carved gourds), with a large shed at the end. Happily, a curious old barouche was in waiting on the chance of passengers, and in this I traversed the mile or so between the lake port and the home of shrewd old Nicarao. The biggest mango-trees in Central America line this road, enormous trees, loaded with yellow and pink fruit.

Rivas itself is a white, sunny, open, empty town, which has no appearance of being busy, but as a matter of fact passes on all the cacao and lumber and hides of the region; for, little as one might think it, there is a sea-carrying trade touching the somnolent margin where the southern San Juan River flows into the sea. Not very much of the cacao of Rivas goes abroad, for all Nicaragua prizes it highly, paying as much as 1*s.* 6*d.* a pound for these delicate beans; perhaps this estimate is partly due to the old repute that this region of the long-forgotten Nahuatl colony possessed for secret wisdom of nature; it is whispered that here are semi-magic cures for snake-bite, febrifuges, that no other part of the country knows, balms and resins, herbs from the forest found or prepared in no other region; and, especially, remedies for the prevailing *mal de estomac* from which all maize-eating America suffers.

Rivas has a big old church; a number of modernly appointed stores, and two hotels, but I hurried from them after a glance, fearful that the *Victoria* might change her mind again. We got back late at night, with the lake as calm as a saucer and Granada asleep in the moonlight.

THE CACAO TREE:
HARVESTING RIPE PODS

CHAPTER XVI

DOWN THE SAN JUAN RIVER

Across the Lake to San Carlos—Rio Frio and the Guatusos—Castillo Viejo—Groce and Cannon—San Carlos and Sarapiquí Rivers—The Two Mouths—Colorado Channel—Greytown, Ciudad America—Monkey Point—Bluefields.

IF you want to see something of the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua, of Greytown (San Juan del Norte), of Bluefields, of the old Mosquito Coast and the new banana and coco-nut belt, and if you happen to be, when this idea takes you, in Granada, the journey down the San Juan River is worth while, even now, when the waterway services are in poor condition. The river is a typical example of an east-flowing stream of the Central American Caribbean, and has its beauties; but it is well to remember that mosquitoes abound and that food is limited. To be reasonably comfortable, take with you a mosquito "bar," a small pillow and hammock and bedding, and such tins of foodstuffs as your fancy dictates. The trip should take three days, but one never knows.

To cross the lake from Granada, in order to connect with the river steamer which should start three times a month from San Carlos, at the junction of lake and river, one may with luck find a boat making an independent journey to that spot; otherwise there is the regular steamer, calling at San Jorge, Moyagalpa, San Ubaldo, Morrito and San Miguelito, before reaching San Carlos. This latter point was formerly a rubber-collecting station, but nowadays market depression has killed almost all Central America's chance of competition; the village is a draggled little place. If the river steamer has not made her appearance, you can shoot egrets or alliga-

tors, or hire a canoe and explore the Rio Frio, running down from Costa Rica; the headwaters of the Rio Frio are in wild country, and you will still hear tales of the strange tribe of Indians, the "Guatusos," traditionally said to have white skins and red hair.

This legend has long been exploded; the Rio Frio Indians do not differ from their kin of the Atlantic forest, but they are shy and fearful of strangers, and speak a tongue which marks them as descendants of the old Corobici race of Costa Rica. The Guatuso folk still use bows and arrows and stone hatchets, and live in open, gabled sheds thatched with palm leaf and supported on strong posts; they make fine hammocks and are famous for growing splendid plantains.

If time still hangs on your hands, you may fish for the freshwater sharks peculiar to Lake Nicaragua, monsters which perhaps made their way up the river from the Caribbean long years ago, were caught here by the rising of the river-bed, and have accommodated themselves. But here is the river boat, flat-bottomed, stern-wheeled, a veteran of the river; your cot is placed under a deck awning, and as the white outline of the mosquito net informs all the insects of the river and forest of your whereabouts, the night is likely to be wakeful, and you can admire the strong, racing river, 500 or 600 feet wide, at the point where the lake empties into the river. San Carlos' one long street turns out for a send-off, and one enters a wall of green, the flower-crowned heads of the shouldering trees bright in the moonlight; the only breaks are the openings where tributary rivers pour their floods into the main stream; before we reach Castillo Viejo we pass five good-sized rivers entering from the left, and four from the Costa Rican side. Castillo Viejo comes in sight on the afternoon of the next day, with the great ruined walls of the old Spanish fort, ten feet thick, overlooking the river from a little hill. This was the castle held by English forces for six months in 1762, when England was at war with Spain; and here the Americans Groce and Cannon were shot after laying a mine to blow up Nicaraguan troops on the *Diamante*. The measure to which Nicaragua has since been made to prostrate herself is displayed by the marble monument

now erected, at the cost of the Nicaraguan Government, to these dynamiters, at Castillo Viejo; in addition, Nicaragua's financial rulers paid a lump sum in indemnity to the family of Cannon, while the widow of Groce, remarried to a Nicaraguense, receives a monthly pension.

Just below the old castle are rapids, and all freight and passengers are transferred to shore and carried by a mule-drawn car to whatever means of further conveyance wait below. In the wet season, steamers are frequently able to negotiate these rapids without trouble, but when I made the trip the end of the dry season was in sight, and the river was shallow all the way to Machuca. Nothing but a heavy, flat-bottomed lighter dared risk the journey; this meant a day and a night in the open, a matter of no inconvenience under beautiful blue skies by day and floods of almost golden moonlight at night; and with plenty of blankets, a spirit stove and a box of stores, this was no more than a picnic. At Machuca everything was transferred again at this second series of rapids, and if another little river steamer is waiting, as she should be, the journey is half over.

A large, full-flowing river entering on the right, presently appears, the San Carlos; and from this point to the sea Costa Rica shares rights with Nicaragua over the San Juan River. Another fine tributary entering some miles farther on is the beautiful Sarapiquí, clothed with palms and wild cane, rich with bird and animal life. Both the San Carlos and the Sarapiquí rush down from high mountainous country, carrying sand and debris that creates miniature bars at the junction with the San Juan, and spreads that river into swamp. Within twenty miles of the sea the atmosphere becomes heavier, the vegetation of a brighter green, and the river wanders, growing more shallow, forming islets, and finally dividing into two main channels, the more northerly San Juan and the southerly Colorado.

Once upon a time the main flood went by the San Juan outlet, a wooded island parting the waters; but after the middle of last century many trees were cut down to feed the wood-burning river boats of the Transit, and the island began washing away; with the result at last that the main flood goes

by the Colorado mouth, leaving Greytown to the lessening stream and a growing series of mud flats and lagoons.

A motor-launch met the little steamer at the water parting, took passengers down the Colorado channel, and negotiated the bars between this entrance and that of Greytown without difficulty; these silted, ever-changing, treacherous bars have an ancient, sinister repute, for when vessels are wrecked upon them he who escapes drowning has to fear the shark that haunts these waters in thousands.

Greytown has been a pretty little port, with its coco-nut palms, neat frame-houses raised on legs, its crotons and hibiscus; but its brisk day is over—until the Nicaraguan canal is constructed. The inhabitants still speak regretfully of the day when this was under British supervision and a free port; when Mosquitia, the kingdom farcical in appearance yet founded in good sense, flourished. It would have been better for Nicaragua if Mosquitia was still a British protectorate. The definite end of this protection came in 1894, when the Nicaraguan Government pressed for the region's incorporation; the Harrison-Altamirano Treaty arranged later between England and Nicaragua provided for the "recommendation to Congress" of a law which should exempt for fifty years from military service and taxation all Mosquito Indians born before 1894, that is, subjects of the then Mosquito King; also for the undisturbed occupation of land for each Mosquito family. The British consul in Nicaragua still does his best with claims made by the Indians under this treaty.

To-day the busiest town on the East Coast is Bluefields, named after the Dutch buccaneer Blieveldt. I visited this place in a little coasting boat from Greytown, passing on the way the little coast village, a few huts only, that marks the abandoned Maritime Canal begun by Americans in the 'eighties; a few French dredges were bought from Panama, and a few miles of waterway still visible were cut through the flat lands of the shore. But money ran out when this initial strip of dredging and cutting had been done, and a mile or so of construction line laid in the jungle. The whole scheme was abandoned. Ciudad America is no more than a few rotting sheds, scraps of rusty iron, and a name.

The plan followed by the American company was that of the Nicaraguan engineer Menocal, which agreed generally with the work and suggestions of Bailey, the English naval officer who surveyed the route in 1838. The total length of the canal route would be 170 miles, of which eighty would traverse the San Juan River, and sixteen miles would be cut through the mainland from near San Jorge to San Juan del Sur on the Pacific; the rest is lake navigation, with a few miles of canalizing at the eastern end to avoid the existing delta swamps—and controversies; for any attempt to dam the San Juan in order to get enough water for the final twelve miles would probably interfere with the flow of the Colorado in Costa Rican territory. As Lake Nicaragua is about 110 feet above sea-level, three locks would be built between the lake and the Pacific, and three others in the course of the San Juan; the river would be dredged and cleared of rocks—this presenting no serious engineering difficulty, since there is no fall upon the river's length, but only rapids caused by rocks and shallows. As estimated about 1885, the cost was reckoned at twelve million pounds sterling; period for execution of the work, six years; and the time for vessels to pass through the completed canal, less than thirty hours. Probably this estimate of costs was rosy; we may note that the Panama Canal cost eighty million pounds sterling, for a route of less than fifty miles, and took thirty years of French and American effort.

Probably, had the French been able to complete the Panama waterway, the United States would again have taken up construction in Nicaragua seriously; but luck was against de Lesseps. The efforts made were heroic, most of the French buildings still stand, and the engineering scheme was so sound that, as every one knows who saw the canal during the period of construction, it was followed in the main by the American heirs of the French work; plans were bigger, because steamships had grown enormously between 1880 and 1904. Much of the old French equipment was good enough to use: I saw the old French dredge *Louise* doing duty right up to the time of the canal opening in 1915.

It was not engineering difficulties, nor money shortage,

although both of these troubles loomed in the offing, that paralysed French work; but the guilt of the mosquito as a fever carrier was not known, and the courageous French and their employés died like flies along the route of the jungle-bordered canal. When Ronald Ross and Patrick Manson established the truth about the mosquito, the way was immediately opened for the elimination of yellow fever by the suppression of the stegomyia mosquito, in any tropic region; and for the lessening of malaria by reductions in the ranks of the anopheles. From such green, swampy, bush-clad shores as these of the Caribbean, this mosquito cannot be banished. It is the curse of these beautiful, palmy, mangrove-bordered coasts; and if there are in existence any varieties of mosquitoes more vicious, more huge and more hungry, than those of the Nicaraguan and Honduran east coast, you will find them in New Orleans when the wind sets from Lake Pontchartrain.

A day's sail northwards brings you to Monkey Point, the Atlantic end of Zelaya's projected railway, a quite feasible line which will some day be built. A few miles of track have lain in the underbrush since 1911, when Zelaya's regime came to an end. It was by the irony of fate that it was this east coast, the old Mosquito Kingdom, that Zelaya insisted upon adding definitely to the Nicaraguan republic (as the *Departamento Zelaya*) which served later as the forcing-ground, the convenient jumping-off place, for the revolutionists who caused his disappearance from the field of Nicaraguan politics. The east coast is widely separated from the west, as regards space, interests, population, and products; it had a silver currency when Nicaragua proper was using paper pesos, its income was sufficient for its needs and it had no debt; incorporation meant heavy taxes, and revenues shipped to the west. This alone was a grievance sufficient to make Mosquitia look, if not with acute interest, at least without impatience, at revolutionists, from Zelaya's time down to the little attempt of Messrs. Sands and Strange, two Americans who in 1917 made themselves the President and Minister of Finance of the "Republic of Caribbea" for quite a number of hours. Until, indeed, a Nicaraguan soldier was unfeeling enough to shoot

the embryo president in the hand, when he retired to the American consulate and all was over.

An hour or two more of sailing in the lapis-lazuli blue of the Caribbean, past decorative green islands adorned with palms, and we enter the long lagoon at whose northern end stands "El Bluff," the hill that has been famous in many a "revolution." The great stretch of salt water, almost closed by the long sand-bars, is thirty miles from north to south, and over five miles deep, with the town of Bluefields standing on the edge of the mainland at the back of the lagoon, near the mouth of the Bluefields (or Escondido) River. This is the most southerly of a wonderful series of lagoons, spreading up to and beyond the Honduras border at Cape Gracias as far as old Trujillo. For long stretches of the Mosquito Coast these guarded lagoons create an interior waterway safe from the storms of the Caribbean, with its own peculiar flora and fauna, a world of its own. With a cut and a small canal the Bluefields lagoon could be opened into Pearl Lagoon, and the alligators that lie like logs, their dark bodies rising and falling with the motion of the tide, careless of the water-birds that run over their backs, would have one retreat the less.

Bluefields is a busy little town nowadays, collecting point for the banana launches that come down the river from Rama and Recreo; steamers from New Orleans wait for this cargo of green bunches, and all night long the lines of sweating Negroes shuffle, barefooted, up and down the gangways, each with a big bunch on his back; here, or Limón, or at Tela, or Bocas del Toro, anywhere along this steamy banana coast, all the heavy work of planting and loading bananas is performed by British West Indian Negroes, hard workers, born with hands that make plants grow, and cheerful souls; you would be mistaken if, hearing them sing their solemn lamenting hymns from sundown to sunrise as they trot backwards and forwards with their interminable loads, you thought them melancholy.

Bluefields is a frame-house town, and like all these communities, when times are good and the wooden dwellings, balconied, raised on legs, are gaily painted, and someone finds

time to start a pink coralillo vine growing over the railings, it is pleasant, a smiling, summer city; but nothing can look more desolate, abandoned, blighted, miserable and mouldy with an undignified and shabby mouldiness than these same wooden towns under a commercial cloud. Bluefields has been the scene of notable fights between rival American banana companies, with charges of conspiracy, arson, blackmail, and so on; but Bluefields cares little so long as a decent price is paid for the fruit of the independent planters, and the dreaded "Panama" disease that, in the end, always ruins banana plantations, keeps away.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MOSQUITO COAST

Ancient Extent—Two Unlucky Settlements—Zambos and Moscos—Treaty of Paris—Canning—Morazan and Canal Construction—King George William—Chatfield—Squier—Clayton-Bulwer Treaty—Panama Railway—Stephens and Catherwood—Walker's Expedition—Castellon—*El Nicaraguense*—The Transit—Costa Rica sends an Army—Europe and Latin America Roused—Filibusters desert Walker—New Orleans—Second Expedition—Third Attempt—Annexation of Mosquito Coast.

THE famous "Mosquito Territory" once extended all the way from the Mosquito Gulf, whose waters wash the shores of the fatal Veragua of Columbus, to Cape Camerón, Honduras. Follow the southern bend of the Mosquito Gulf, and near Mosquito Point, about half-way between the Gulf of San Blas and the Gulf of Darien, is the site of the ill-fated Scotch colony of Darien, still remembered in the names of Punto Escocés and Caledonia Harbour. A mile or two to the north of Caledonia Harbour is another unlucky site, Acla, where Pedrarias beheaded Vasco Nuñez de Balboa. The Scots colony was fathered by William Paterson, founder of the Bank of England, and his Darien scheme included not only the settlement of "New Caledonia" but the canalizing of the Panama Isthmus and a trading project; the English parliament opposed the plan, and no agreement had been reached with Spain for cession of the land. Nevertheless, 1,200 courageous Scots left Leith in 1698 and sailed in four months to Punto Escocés. Within a year sickness and starvation had broken up the colony, and a second detachment of 1,300 colonists were faced by Spanish troops, to whom they were forced to surrender. Only thirty men, including the crazed and broken Paterson, reached Scotland, in 1703.

Northwards, to the end of the Mosquito Territory, on the coast of Honduras, another vanished colony of later date is remembered by the name "English Town," close to Iriona.

With the story of the Mosquito Coast is inextricably interwoven the fate of the Nicaragua Canal, the great alternative waterway to the Panama route; the Transit; and the filibustering expedition of Walker. The inhabitants of Mosquitia were but pawns in the game.

Just as runaway Negro slaves haunted the Isthmus of Panama, befriended by the native tribes and, hostile to the Spaniards, ready to help any European buccaneer, so they took refuge on the road by which Guatemala sent her merchandise to the Golfo Dulce, and in that other favourite locality near the mouth of the San Juan River, where these "Cimarrones" (outlaws) watched for the ships to and from Granada and worked with the pirates of the cays and lagoons. The nucleus of these bands of the Mosquito coast seems to have been well developed by the middle of the sixteenth century, and a race of mixed Indian and African blood, called Zambos, to distinguish them from the folk of purer Central American blood, the "Moscos" (apparently of the same tribes as those who now call themselves "Misquitos") was developed, protected by and helpers of the buccaneers who were sufficiently well instructed in the topography of this wild and tangled country to make their way up the Wanks River from Cape Gracias, in 1643, and surprise the town of Matagalpa.

By this time, in addition to raiders, a good many English were cutting logwood and mahogany along the splendid forests of the Mosquito coast, and Bluefields was an established town, presently trading with Jamaica and Belize. When the Treaty of Madrid, in 1671, made peace between the Governments of Spain and England, with an agreement that any American lands occupied by the English should so remain, this chief town of Mosquitia was practically an English port. The native allies, Zambos and Moscos, multiplied, flourished, and grew so strong that when their chief Hannibal, in 1711,

offered a treaty of peace to the Spanish governor of Costa Rica, demanding, amongst his terms, recognition as ruler of the coast, with freedom to trade, his suggestion was formally accepted. But raids continued, and the Zambos were only driven from their occupation of the mouth of the Colorado by a special Spanish effort in 1724; the Audience of Guatemala sent more cannon for the river's defence, and the *Gaçeta* of Guatemala remarked that the Moscos really had advantages that the Spanish colonies lacked—they had a navy, excellent arms, and the right to trade with the world.

A little later, appealing to the English for protection against more active attempts to dislodge them, the inhabitants of the Mosquito Coast were taken under the protection of Britain; the Zambo ruler was definitely recognized in 1740, and in 1748 when England and Spain had again been at loggerheads for some years, San Juan del Norte was held and fortified by English troops. Twenty years later the Mosquito Coast chief, "Admiral Dilson," was able to exact from the Spanish authorities in Costa Rica recognition as independent Governor of the Coast; ten years later Costa Rica agreed to pay 800 pesos a year to the Mosquito ruler, and did actually pay this, a subsidy to secure peace from raiding, throughout the rest of the colonial period and after independence from Spain, until 1840.

Fourteen thousand people are estimated to have occupied the Mosquito Coast in the year 1780, the Zambo chief residing at Bracman town, while the King of the Mosquitos held his court in Sandeve. The head-quarters of the English were at Bluefields, with a colony developing at Greytown, or San Juan del Norte as the Nicaraguans call it.

In 1783 the long-drawn-out struggle, a struggle which had gone on intermittently for 300 years, was brought to an end by the Treaty of Paris; and, while agreements covered the various regions temporarily held by the English, the Mosquito Coast was not evacuated because it had never been acknowledged as Spanish territory; but in 1787, under a new agreement, the British settlers withdrew to Belize (taking with them the nucleus of those "Caribs" or "Waikas" who

are regarded with such liking in British Honduras) and the question of the Mosquito Coast was forgotten in the earthquake of the French Revolution, the spectacular rise of Napoleon, the tumbling of thrones, and amongst them, that of Spain. When, in 1814, Ferdinand VII's restoration was followed by tactless treatment of the American colonies, most of which had remained loyal in spite of the diffusion of the ideas of the French encyclopædists and the rise of a political and military clique with eyes firmly fixed upon separation, the road to independence was inevitably opened. The formal act of 1821 was but part of a movement affecting all Spanish America, from Mexico to Patagonia. To that movement England lent practical support, in the form of volunteer troops and money; a loan came from Barclay's in London in 1825, to the Central American Federation, after the little group of new republics had been recognized, and the broad principle of the doctrine promulgated by Monroe had been suggested to the American president by the British Prime Minister, Canning. Had Monroe retained the clause which Canning included, by which the United States, while saying "Hands off" to Europe, or rather to the Holy Alliance, themselves also promised to keep hands off the ex-Spanish colonies, much misery to the new countries would have been saved; but the United States was growing rapidly—Louisiana had been purchased in 1803, Florida's cession obtained from Spain in 1819, and the annexation of Texas from Mexico was already foreshadowed. When this territory broke loose in 1836, and was incorporated with the United States in 1845, the way was immediately paved for the picking of a quarrel with Mexico and the seizure of another half-million square miles, California, Arizona and New Mexico. By 1849, when the gold rush to California began, and the search for a route across the width of a roadless continent sent international fortune-seekers trekking over the desert, across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, and through the jungles of Panama, Central America attained new importance as the scene of the natural waterway of the Nicaraguan river and lake. Considering eyes were cast upon Nicaragua.

But in the meantime several plans for canal construction

in Nicaragua had had a brief day. Morazan, President of the Central American Federation, faced with the failure of a contract made with the United States in 1826 and with Holland four years later, arranged for a scientific survey to be made by British naval officers, in 1837; this work came to an end with the downfall of Morazan, but in 1838 Nicaragua and Honduras jointly made an attempt to interest the French, in the person of the imprisoned Louis Napoleon. The future emperor had listened to the charming Castellón, with so much enthusiasm that he wrote a booklet, declaring that "just as Constantinople is the centre of the ancient world, so is the town of León the centre of the new." He was convinced, said Louis, that Nicaragua was "destined to attain an extraordinary degree of prosperity and grandeur." But he could get no money for the project.

To operate a canal, you must own both ends of it; but across the Atlantic end stood Mosquitia with its king. So Nicaraguan officials took possession of San Juan del Norte, and expelled his majesty, who forthwith went to Belize for help; Superintendent Macdonald sent back the king on a gunboat, turned out the Nicaraguense official, and took the king's heir apparent, George William, to Jamaica for proper regal instruction. He succeeded to the throne in 1845, was formally crowned in Jamaica, and brought to Mosquitia by Patrick Walker (appointed British Consul to Bluefields), who thenceforth guided George William's dusky hand. All this was desperately annoying to the United States, with distinct ideas formulating about the waterway. The president had sent, in 1839, that pleasant traveller, John Lloyd Stephens, with a view to reaching an arrangement with the Federalized Government of Central America, and although no result was obtained in that time of dissolution, the envoy wrote the book of his experiences and those of the English artist, Catherwood, to which reference has already been made. Stephens was disillusioned by his journey. He had read all that had been published on this subject in England and the United States. He says: "I had been sanguine, almost enthusiastic, in regard to this gigantic enterprise; but on the spot the scales fell from my eyes."

But with the English determinedly enforcing the Mosco king's rights, and again taking possession of San Juan del Norte in 1848, the United States sent another envoy, Squier, whose chief article of faith told him that England was moribund; the English ought to be, must be, decadent; the sight of a live Briton was an almost incredible outrage, and it was more than his eyes could bear to see them cheerfully walking the earth. One can understand that Mosquitia nearly made him hysterical, that he had no words strong enough for the English consul, then the redoubtable Frederick Chatfield, and that he pressed his plan of an agreement by which the "American Atlantic and Pacific Ship Canal Company" agreed to build a canal across Nicaragua. In view of what subsequently happened in Panama, it is interesting to note that this company pressed for exclusive rights over the route, and for exemption of United States' citizens and goods from dues and taxes to which other nations were to be subject, although Nicaragua was able to insist upon her own ultimate sovereignty, and ownership of the canal after 85 years, a rent of 10,000 dollars to be meanwhile paid by the company to the Nicaraguan Government. To the exclusive control clause England at once objected, foreseeing the attempt which was actually made a few years later by Walker, to create a North American slave-holding enclave in Central America. All British slaves had been freed in 1834, but below latitude 36° 30′ the American states clung to the system, and, with the Civil War's shadow already projected, looked about for fresh fields. England made her point, arranging the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty by which joint protection of the future Nicaraguan canal by Britons and Americans was agreed, the United States at the same time abjuring the exclusive control clause, or the exercise of dominion over Nicaraguan territory. As regards Mosquitia, at the canal's eastern end, correspondence exchanged in 1850 between Britain and the United States is illuminating. Clayton was frank concerning his reasons for objecting to the Mosquito king, declaring:

"We have never acknowledged, and can never acknowledge, the existence of any claim of sovereignty in the Mosquito King, or any

other Indian in America. To do so would be to deny the title of the United States to our own territories. . . . Having always regarded an Indian title as a mere right of occupancy, we can never agree that such a title should be treated otherwise than as a thing to be extinguished at the will of the discoverer of the country."

In all her years of occupancy of her American colonies, Spain never laid down any such axiom, summarily disposing of the rights of the original owners of the soil.

The Clayton-Bulwer Treaty was followed by the Dallas-Clarendon (August, 1856), and upon the explicit clauses is based the " free and equal treatment " of all shipping through the Panama Canal; neutralization, also desirable, of the waterway, is not within America's purview. This fact was demonstrated in Versailles when Mr. Wilson refused to join France and Britain in pressing for the neutralization of the Kiel Canal, since such action on his part would have set a disconcerting example for Panama.

To return to the Nicaraguan Canal Company. Rights were handed over to one David White, who acquired a partner, Charles Morgan; these two proceeded to inaugurate a travel-route through the San Juan River and the great Lake, with steamers brought to Nicaragua; they built a road from the lake's edge to San Juan del Sur, where other steamers waited to transfer passengers to California, and very soon they were conducting thousands of 'forty-niners to the goldfields and making a fortune. But not a stroke was done towards the construction of a canal. The Panama Railway began its work; and next came William Walker.

The Panama Railway comes within our survey, not only because it is geographically and ethnographically attached to América Central, but because events on the Isthmus have always cast a reflection upon the five countries to the north, and particularly upon Costa Rica and Nicaragua.

John Lloyd Stephens, despite his view of Nicaragua, had not finished with transcontinental thoroughfares. In 1848 we find him applying, in conjunction with William Aspinwall and Henry Chauncey, to the Government of Colombia (or rather, the union of Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador then experimenting as the Republic of New Granada) for a concession

to build a trans-isthmian railway. Work started on Manzanillo Island, near the present Colón, in May of 1850, the first difficult task being the creation of a solid road-bed through the swamp to join the island to the mainland. Fever and exposure took their victims; 40 per cent. of the workers are said to have died at their task, and the West Indian Negro proved the only stable worker. He built the Panama Railway as he later built the Panama Canal. By October, 1851, the line ran to Gatun; and a small strip at the Panama side was completed at the same time, for the constructors built from both ends, carrying the material for the Pacific work all round the Horn. On January 27th, 1855, in a rainstorm at midnight, the last rail was laid when the two strips met at Culebra. The company had already, on the incomplete line, earned over 2,000,000 dollars gold, was paying 24 per cent., and charged twenty-five dollars (£5) for the railway ride across the Isthmus. Streams of gold miners went across this route, abandoning the Nicaraguan Transit, although even in the few days of their arrival and departure the deadly climate took its toll. Among the victims of Panama was John Lloyd Stephens himself; you may still see the triangular memorial to him and his fellow concessionaires at Colón. It used to stand in front of the old wooden Washington Hotel, and has now been removed to a less conspicuous site in the grounds of the New. The name of Aspinwall with which the railway operators tried to christen Colón did not survive, but Stephens was one of the delightful travellers to whom one cannot fail to pay the small tribute of a salute to his memorial stone.

While on the subject of Stephens, let me tell here of the fate of his companion in the famous Central American journey, the English artist, Frederick Catherwood, gifted with a marvellous eye and hand.

When on their way out through northern Guatemala in 1840 it happened that Catherwood, dismounted at a difficult mountain road, grubbed about among the rocks and found some rather remarkable fragments. As he examined them, Stephens called to him to hurry; Catherwood put the bits of stone in his pocket, and eventually in his baggage, without thinking any more of them or the place whence he had taken them until

he reached New York. There he showed them to friends, and they reached the hands of an assayer, who pronounced them to be wonderful, extraordinarily rich, specimens of gold-bearing ore.

Catherwood told the tale to a British diplomat, newly accredited and about to set out to Guatemala, and this gentleman, becoming friendly with Rafael Carrera, repeated it to the Indian dictator. Carrera wanted money badly, and he saw chances of enormous wealth to carry out all his plans. Greatly excited, he begged the Minister to offer every inducement to Catherwood, including a share in the mine, if he would come to Guatemala and identify the spot. Catherwood accepted the proposition, bought machinery and camping equipment, saw it shipped in a schooner from New Orleans, and decided not to accompany it but to take passage in a steamer, a new venture, about to make her trial trip from the mouth of the Mississippi to Caribbean waters. The steamer set out: but she never reached any port. Nor was any person on board ever heard of again.

When at last the vessel had to be given up, when Carrera realized that Catherwood had perished, and with Catherwood all hopes of finding the gold mine, his grief and disappointment knew no bounds; he literally tore his hair. Also, he ordered searches to be made in the locality of the find, so far as it could be identified from Catherwood's own casual remembrance. For he, with no map of the country, had had no idea of the position of the place, but said that he could recognize it again.

For months, bodies of men sent by Carrera scoured the mountain paths, taking scraps of rock from every cliff and boulder in likely and unlikely regions, urged desperately by the President. But never did they find poor Catherwood's mine, and from that day to this no sign of it has been discovered. This tale was told to me by the explorer of Guatemalan ruins, Dr. Alfred P. Maudslay, who had it from the diplomat.

The worst damage ever yet done to Nicaragua, morally and physically, was wrought by the Walker affair of 1856–60.

William Walker was a native of Nashville, Tennessee; growing up, a southerner, amongst slave-holders, he sympathized with those who, seeing the day approach when abolition was inevitable, cast about for a sugar- and cotton-growing region where the hand of the North would not be felt. He, or his backers, first pitched upon and invaded the State of Sonora in Mexico: he was driven out. This was in 1854. A few months later he invaded Lower California, also Mexican territory, with a band of adventurers; he set up a "republic," and elected himself president, before he was again expelled. The Mexican Government made a complaint, and a farce was gone through of trying Walker before a jury in San Francisco; he was triumphantly acquitted, and next looked about for a nation less powerful than Mexico. The internal dissensions of Nicaragua offered him an opportunity.

In his own name nothing could be done, so Byron Cole was, in December, 1854, sent to León, to offer an American contingent to the Liberal leader, Castellón, then engaged in civil war with the conservative forces of Granada, headed by the President, Fruto Chamorro. Castellón was foolish enough to accept, and signed an agreement to pay the mercenaries in cash and in land. Cole went back to San Francisco, transferred the agreement to Walker, who got together fifty-eight men and a few arms, and arrived at Realejo in June, 1855. Marching to León, they were warmly received by Castellón, but coldly by Muñoz, the Nicaraguan general in command of the Liberal forces, who distrusted Walker; but the filibuster was sent to Rivas, met with disaster, extricated his small force only with difficulty, and returned to León to quarrel with his employers. He now refused to follow the orders of Muñoz for the disposition of his force, marched away to a separate camp, and awaited events. Luck was with him; for in a short time the three most influential men in Nicaragua were dead—Chamorro, in Granada; Castellón, a victim of cholera; and Muñoz, killed in battle. Walker hurried to a little lake port, La Virgen, captured it, received reinforcements, and was able to seize control of Granada while the Conservative army was in Rivas under the command of Corral.

Holding Granada, Walker was in a position to make terms with Corral, and also with the leaders in León, in whose interests he pretended to act, but whom he did not consult. News of his success attracted adventurers to him rapidly, many men joining him by way of the famous Transit, now operated by Cornelius Vanderbilt, and he felt strong enough to ignore the leader of the Conservatives, Estrada, and to set up a puppet president, Patricio Rivas. Next, he began to clear the ground of inconvenient people, shooting Estrada's Foreign Minister, Mayorga, and next, General Corral, towards the end of 1855. Nicaraguan feeling was outraged, but Walker was ready to show his hand, and in fact now made his whole scheme plain in his newspaper, *El Nicaraguense*, which, although containing flattering articles concerning the Central Americans in the Spanish section, in the English columns coolly made direct offers to the slave-holders of the United States, ignoring Nicaraguan anti-slavery laws, and speaking of the Nicaraguenses in insulting terms. This precious rag was distributed freely in the United States, and Washington made no bones about recognizing President Rivas at the instance of Wheeler, the U.S. Minister in Nicaragua and an active helper of Walker. A public proclamation was issued from Washington in January, 1856, forbidding enlistment in Walker's expedition; but recruiting nevertheless continued.

With extraordinary indiscretion Walker now seized all the lake and river steamers of the Transit; it was true that the company had not kept its financial agreement with the Nicaraguan Government, but Vanderbilt denied Walker's right, in any case, to interfere, and was furious when he found that the filibuster had sold the property back to Morgan, one of the original owners from whom he (Vanderbilt) had acquired it. Thenceforth he worked actively against Walker.

At the same time other complications arose; Costa Rica, gallantly taking up the cudgels, sent an army against Walker in March, 1856, won a couple of victories at Santa Rosa and Rivas, but was compelled to withdraw these troops when cholera killed 800 men; the example stirred all Latin America, and later in the same year Guatemala and Salvador also sent troops.

For, meanwhile, Walker quarrelled with Rivas, proclaimed new "elections," and, appearing boldly as a popular candidate, declared himself elected—with nearly 16,000 votes, all cast in Rivas and Granada, where the ballot was taken, no other electors having a voting privilege. He was installed in July, was immediately recognized by the United States, and proceeded to confiscate all the property of his political opponents, to declare English as the official language, and to annul the Nicaraguan Constitutional clause which forbade slavery.

Britain, France and Spain protested strongly to Washington, and the British cruiser *Cossack* patrolled the Caribbean coast, with a godfatherly eye upon the Mosquito territory; Brazil, Chile and Peru, much roused, offered arms and money for the defeat of Walker; the anti-slavery North of the United States, while welcoming any prospect of the exodus of the slave-holders of the South to some other region, deprecated the scandal of Walker and demanded the government's disavowal. In the middle of this international storm, the troops of Salvador and Guatemala marched into Nicaragua, large numbers of outraged Nicaraguenses combined with them, and Honduras likewise took the field.

Walker's forces, amounting now to nearly 2,000 men, were defeated at Masaya and San Jacinto, tried to concentrate in Granada, but were driven out and fell back on Rivas. Then came the loss, practically at one blow, of all the steamers of the Transit. Vanderbilt had made terms with an old captain of the route, and this Spencer, entering from Costa Rica by way of the Sarapiquí River, seized four steamers at Greytown, two on the upper reaches of the river San Juan, and the seventh and last on Lake Nicaragua, and also took possession of the river forts, before Walker had an inkling of the attack. The seizure was completed in February, 1857.

The fact was brought home by the offer of General Mora, of Costa Rica, to give a free passage back to the United States to deserters from Walker's army; at once the army incontinently melted away, over 1,200 men being transported before the middle of 1857. Others took up land in interior Nicaragua and in Costa Rica. While this army dissolved, Walker still

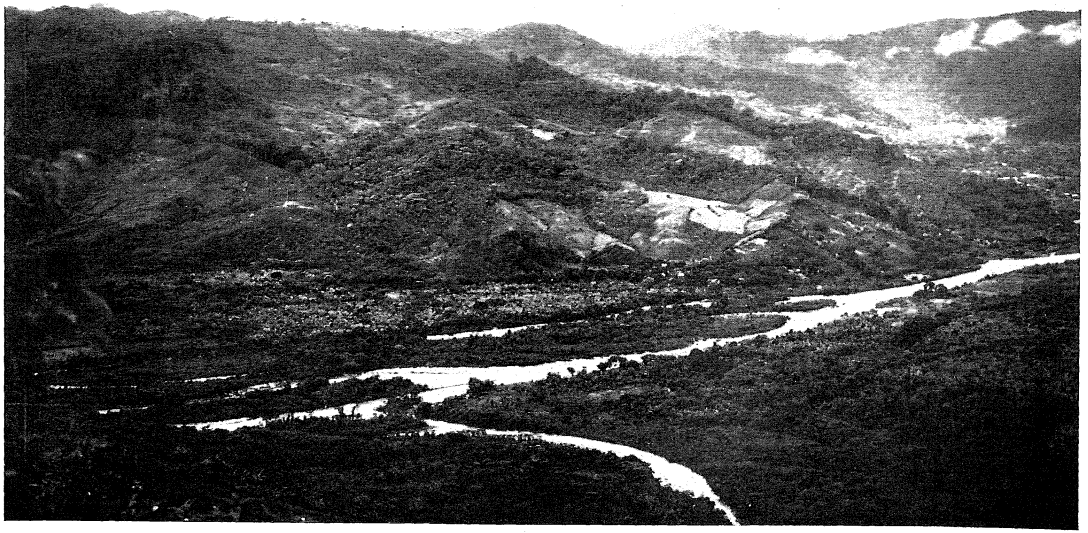
had hopes of receiving new recruits, a force of 400 men having arrived from the United States at the mouth of San Juan just about the time that Spencer was making his dramatic seizures of the Transit boats. Lockridge, in charge of the new force, tried to ascend the San Juan, camped a few miles upstream, and attempted to seize Castillo Viejo; but, repulsed by the Costa Ricans, whose 300 men under Mora controlled the river, the Americans returned to the camp, a disastrously unhealthy spot where sickness and desertion so reduced their ranks that when Lockridge returned to the mouth of the San Juan he had only 100 men left. Of these some were killed by a boiler explosion on a little steamer, and the rest were collected, with other detachments still arriving at the port, by the Costa Ricans, the British *Cossack* and *Tartar* supporting Mora and depositing 350 men back in the United States in April. Another volunteer force, attempting to enter by the Pacific, from San Francisco, was cut up by the Central Americans between San Juan del Sur and Rivas, and the end was in sight. From a final disaster on the field of battle Walker was at this moment saved by the United States gunboat *St. Mary*, whose captain offered the filibuster a safe conduct home. The "American Phalanx," reduced to about 500 men, gave up their arms, and were also returned to the United States. Walker and his sixteen officers were taken by the *St. Mary* to Panama and crossed to Colón, thence sailing to New Orleans, where their reception roused such popular enthusiasm that the filibuster addressed crowds from an improvised platform in Canal Street. From here he went to Washington, New York, Baltimore and Boston, making speeches, writing newspaper articles, and collecting money and recruits with such success that in November, evading the prohibition proclaimed by Washington when an international protest was made, he was able to sail once more, arriving at San Juan del Norte in November, 1857. He regarded as auspicious a new dispute between Nicaragua and Costa Rica over the control of the river, but his appearance healed the quarrel, and after achieving momentary success in seizing three of the river steamers he was arrested by forces from United States cruisers which opportunely appeared off the coast. In these Walker

and his man were returned to New Orleans, where he was tried by local courts; but his declaration that he was the legal President of Nicaragua acting within his rights was admitted sympathetically, and he was acquitted. The only persons punished were two captains of the American naval forces, one for capturing Walker without definite orders, and the other for not preventing him from landing at San Juan.

Next year Walker tried again, collecting 140 men, and sailing from Mobile in a vessel which was wrecked on Glover's Reef, off British Honduras; a vessel came out from Belize, captured the party, and deposited them back in Mobile. Walker spent the following two years in collecting more funds, in writing flamboyant accounts of his own heroism, and in preparing yet another expedition. The man had by this time become a public nuisance; not only because he suffered from a *idée fixe*, but because he remained the tool of a political party in the United States. His forces were collected on the little island of Ruatan off Honduras, and in August, 1860, sailed to Trujillo and took the town. Honduras took up arms, Guatemala likewise raised an army and at the same time appealed for help to the Superintendent of Belize, who sent a gunboat which acted with a Hondureño vessel in patrolling the coast; Walker's party was found, straggling along the shore, surrender demanded, and their lives promised to all but the leaders. Walker was taken to Trujillo, tried by the authorities, and shot on September 12th, his followers being again automatically deported to the United States.

The departure of Walker from Nicaragua had left the two opposing groups face to face upon a ruined and blood-drenched soil, with a new question, of control of the San Juan River, added. Eventually the rights of Costa Rica over the right bank of the river, from the junction of the San Carlos tributary to the mouth, were agreed upon.

And the Mosquito Kingdom survived, under the direction of the King, England having agreed in the Dallas-Clarendon Treaty to exercise no authority. When, in 1905, Zelaya annexed the territory, a British gunboat came along and took the occupant of the throne, King Robert Henry Clarence,



IN THE UJARRAS VALLEY, COSTA RICA
BETWEEN LIMÓN AND SAN JOSÉ

to Jamaica, where he lived in peace and plenty until the day of his death upon the pension of £3 10*s.* per day allowed him by the British Government. The Mosquito Kingdom is now the Departamento Zelaya.

CHAPTER XVIII

NORTHERN NICARAGUA

Matagalpa—The Road from León—The Approach from the Wanks River—Gracias á Dios—Rayapura—The Mosquito King—Saclin.

IN Northern Nicaragua, amongst the foothills of the east side of the great mountain backbone, is a flourishing, cheerful region of coffee estates, with a jolly little town, Matagalpa. Foreigners have made this district, coffee growers and merchants, with the celebrated Potter brothers in the van, owners of several beautiful estates and a big store.

Matagalpa collects, buys, and dispatches to the port of Corinto, via León, not only coffee (the bulk of this northern crop is shipped with the husk on, in contrast to the system favoured by many other Central American localities where the berry is pulped and the beans cleaned and bagged "en oro"), but the hides of cattle, skins of wild deer, jaguar and puma, feathers of the beautiful birds of the forests. There is an export of cacao of high quality, and there used to flourish a business in the wild rubber of the warm woodland of the river valleys. There is always a certain amount of alluvial gold brought in to this centre. The town is well-built and well-kept. There are many two-story houses with gay gardens. You can buy merchandise more cheaply here than in Managua, shipped directly from Corinto by the British, American and other foreign groups, of whom Germans, always interested in Central American coffee lands, formed a strong element before the War. The climate is delicious, with but little variation all the year round, the thermometer showing its greatest ranges between day and night temperatures, when it moves between about 85° and 65° Fahrenheit. Daily showers refresh the fields even when the rainy season is not in full swing (Novem-

ber to May), but the downfall conveniently arrives at a regular hour in the afternoon, and the sun never fails to show himself every day as well. Altogether, Matagalpa is a highly blessed region and looks from its eyrie down upon the rest of Nicaragua without envy.

The near-by population of the Matagalpa district is "Indian," yielding a dependable labour supply, accustomed to dealing with the estate-operating white man. Matagalpa, as a prosperous commercial town, is new, but the great northernmost province of Segovia, a gigantic region running from near the Gulf of Fonseca right across the broadest part of Central America to the Caribbean Sea, has had struggling Spanish settlements from early colonial days. Right up near the Honduras border, on one of the headwaters of the great Coco, or Wanks, or Yare River, is Ocotal or Nueva Segovia; Old Segovia was so harried by pirates that it was long ago abandoned by most of its colonial population.

For there are two main ways into these northern highlands and forests. The commercial route, the old traditional route, to the Matagalpa country is from León; and until some of the enterprising foreigners brought in motor lorries and tractors to haul cars full of coffee, the mule-train was the chief means of transport; the traveller made the trip on horse or mule back, and generally took two days, spending a night on the way at Progreso. I have not visited Matagalpa, but this is what a resident of León told me of the journey:

"You must avoid the wet season, for then the road is almost impassable, with deep ruts and soft mud. In the dry season this mud is turned into dust, and all the way from León to Jicaral you won't see any scenery because the clouds of dust are so thick. It is best to leave León at three or four o'clock in the afternoon, taking a hammock and bedding, for Progreso is a cattle ranch (hacienda) and not an inn; travellers are made welcome, given space and the use of the fire, and certain kinds of food, at a pinch; but it is not the custom to make provision of any other kind for the guest, at these happy-go-lucky farms.

"As far as Jicaral the country is flat, and there is little vegetation except a scrubby bush that roots in the dark volcanic ash. In the patches of woodland and heavy grass one often sees beautiful deer wandering, apparently very tame; in every tree are flocks of green

parrots and there are numbers of spider monkeys. Los Montes is one of these woodland strips, a pleasant change from the burning open flats where there are no animals but lizards and a few snakes.

"Approaching Jicaral, you cross the Jicaral River seven times; some day there will be a real town here, for the place has developed steadily since the rise of the coffee estate some forty or fifty years ago. Beyond Jicaral the ground rises to the Cuesta de las Tinajas, and presently one can look back and see the row of coast volcanoes—Chichigalpa, Chinandega, Momotombo, all fine peaks. The rider is now negotiating the path threading through the cordillera, a splendid series of rolling meadows and light woodlands, with spreading fields of maize and alfalfa and fodder grasses. Between the switchback of the mountains, three or four thousand feet high here, there is one remarkable plain, the Llano de Sabeco, walled with pines and cedars; a beautiful spot. There is a stiff climb to the crest of the Matagalpa mountain, and from this point one looks right down, from an elevation of about thirty-five hundred feet, upon Matagalpa town, fifteen hundred feet below."

That is the rapid trade route. But there is another way to this northern region, by the door of Cape Gracias á Dios, up the Wanks River.

Travelling down the coast from northern Honduras some few years ago, with a party searching for new, cheap and extensive banana lands, we left the steamer to visit this backwater of the Atlantic coast, grave of so many enterprises. The lagoon into which the Wanks River pours is closed to seaward by the usual foaming bar, and this we crossed in a dug-out sent from shore; sliding through the spray the canoe passed into calm water, and presently to a white beach where the town of Gracias lay strung out, a casual row of wooden veranda'd houses, each with its flamboyant and coco-nut trees; mangroves crowd into the water on either hand, and the forest spreads away behind. As a lagoon, this of Cape Gracias is a taking specimen. Its proportions are beautiful, the rollers are slow and long and green, the surf white as snow; the malachite-green palms rustle in a constant soft breeze. Waterbirds haunt the lagoon, there are acres of water-hyacinths, and there is a queer secrecy about the forest with its blue veil of haze; quite edible oysters cling to the low-growing mangrove bushes. But the haze spells fever, and the legions of flies enjoy a century-old hunger. It is one of these tropic regions where

nobody but the man with a pigmented skin can lead a normal life.

Here was another of the rallying-grounds of the pirates of the century-before-last. All sign of those adventurers is gone. But here are the remnants of an American scheme that once included a railway to interior mines, a dredged port equipped for deep-draught steamers, and an array of hotels to accommodate hundreds of visitors to this new summer resort. Here are the wrecks of one or two frame buildings, and among other flotsam is a flat-bottomed, stern-wheel steamer, brought out by the promoters and now serving local needs. In this boat we made a trip to Saclin, still looking for banana lands; there is plenty of space, if the ground were cleared, but for reasons which do not enter here that particular plan did not materialize.

Gracias has reasons for its existence; there are mines, whose gold is supposed to pay taxes at the Gracias custom-house, and there are the stores supplying, directly or through smaller stores up-river, the whole of the imported goods used by a huge region. When the Indians can work in peace, without fear of conscription in times of trouble, all kinds of country produce come down the river in native pitpans, from quetzal feathers to mahogany logs, and here the river-folk get themselves comfortably into debt for all their clothes, weapons (guns as well as machetes, nowadays), flour and rice and presents for their women, working the debt down gradually, but rarely paying it off before a new outfit is wanted. If the store is not actually owned by the Indian's employer, as frequently happens, he will authorize the advance, and if anyone else takes the worker over he must take over the debt-account too. Sometimes an Indian will run away from a pile of debt; especially if he is harshly treated. But as a rule the system does not work so badly, and there is a kindly relation between the hacendado and his half-independent men, who are by no means servile.

Up-river is a series of villages belonging to the Mísquito Indians, and at Rayapura is a little place on the river bank where until recently still dwelt the last King of the Mosquito Coast. I quote the account of a naturalist visitor to the river in 1905, Mervyn G. Palmer:

"I was introduced to His Highness Andrew Hendy, the Mísquito King. I found him to be a short, thick-set, clean-visaged old man with a remarkably intelligent face, and clad in clean clothes and boots. He submitted to the ordeal of having his portrait taken with typical royal calm, exhibiting his cavalry sabre. He spoke good English, and also speaks Spanish, a rarity with Mísquito Indians. The Nicaraguan Government has educated three of his sons, two in Managua and one in the United States.

"King Andrew Hendy is a river magistrate and levies fines which I was told go direct to the royal pocket, not to the Nicaraguan treasury. Later inquiry showed me that King Andrew draws the royal salary of 150 *soles* per month, or about £3 15*s*. a week; but I fail to see what he can do with it. His private secretary, who runs a general store in Rayapura as a side line, is also paid a salary by the Nicaraguan Government. He was about fifty years of age, he told me, but he looked much older. He has only two wives."

Nobody seems to be quite certain how these Mísquito Indians, and the Mosquito Coast, got their names; the Mísquitos of to-day are quite firm about the pronunciation of their name, stressed upon the first syllable. Did the Spaniards receive this word from the natives and change it into something more familiar; or did they, certainly finding this coast tormented by the mosquito (diminutive of *mosco*, a fly), christen it on that account, speak of and to the inhabitants as Mosquito coast folk, and introduce the name, modified later by the Indians? The Mísquitos speak a dialect distinct from that of the other Nicaraguan natives, a tongue which the linguistic experts call "Mísquitoan," but which undoubtedly includes a great many words adapted from the English which the pirates taught.

Along the winding river to Saclin you will see typical Central American forest: silk-cotton trees with a crown of gold, buttressed hardwoods, tree-ferns and matted undergrowth; villages lie comparatively thickly, reminding the traveller that this is an ancient highway, stretching for 200 miles to the towns perched among the foothills of the great cordillera; and here and there the forest is broken by pine-flats or savannahs of grass of such familiar appearance that, were it not for the air-plants and palmettos, one might almost think oneself transported by a magic carpet to Surrey.

At Saclin one is in genuine Central American wilds. The

Indians have but little veneer of civilization, trusting the word of their wizards, the "suquias" as regards prophecies of weather and hunting, and as exorcizers of spirits, before any other authority. Food is still more primitive here, if you live in the village; you must learn to eat parrot and monkey, tortillas and beans and rice, cooked with lard, and you must not be squeamish about insect life. The pine "ridges" are, as a matter of fact, fairly clear, comparatively clear, of stinging and burrowing insects, scorpions, centipedes, etc.; for the high heads of the pines leave a clear pathway, and the myriads of ticks that haunt so much of the beautiful Central American jungle have no hiding-places.

W. H. Hudson, in his "Naturalist in La Plata," remarks upon the hundreds of millions of mosquitoes and ticks which, spending all their lives hungry for blood, die without ever having the chance of tasting a drop. He thinks that perhaps the ubiquity of these creatures is responsible for the lack of large mammals in the forests of South America: that the biters and blood-suckers worried the animals out of evolution. Perhaps. It is certain that these lush glades, fine plains and high uplands are to-day far less provided with big animals than, for example, similar regions in Africa.

I went no farther than Saclin. But any traveller who proceeds up the Wanks for another 250 miles or so will arrive in the coffee-growing regions of Segovia by the old pathway of the buccaneers.

CHAPTER XIX

COSTA RICA: LIMÓN TO SAN JOSÉ

Puerto Limón—Road to the Uplands of San José—The Reventazón River—Cartago—The Costa Rican Mountains—San José—The *Josefinas*—The Museum—The Sabana—Puntarenas.

THE port of Limón is the Caribbean outlet of Costa Rica. Like many another Central American town placed upon this eastern littoral, it is of recent foundation, dating only from the construction of the railway begun by the Costa Rican Government in 1872, and completed by the indefatigable Minor C. Keith, with English capital, thirty years ago. The entrance is guarded by a pretty green island, La Uvita, and the coast near by shows a beautiful pale-green line of coco-nut palms, with dark and dense forest as a background.

Limón's appearance depends, almost from year to year, upon its prosperity. As in all frame-built towns, the want of a coat of paint creates an impression of hopeless decay, transformed under the brush in a couple of days to new gaiety. When Limón was, ten years ago, the head and front of shipment for extensive banana plantations, stores multiplied and the streets were thronged: thirty thousand bunches of bananas went out each day from the port in its palmy years. But disease has wrecked the coast plantations, the workers with their pay-rolls have been transported, for the time being, to other new regions, and Limón suffers to a certain extent. But it is the terminus or beginning of the railroad to San José de Costa Rica, is the chief port, and possesses a well-equipped and protected harbour.

The plaza of Limón is notable among all the pretty plazas of Central America, not only for its enormous ranks of

fine Indian laurel trees, but for the scores of different varieties of the croton that flourish above the violets and lilies. From the balcony of the hotel on this plaza one looked right into the branches of one of the Indian laurels, where a big black sloth had his home—a queer beast that seemed to sleep the day and night round, only waking to fling himself into a new impossible attitude amongst the polished leaves. In railway construction days, Limón was haunted by yellow fever, the scourge that took numbers of young lives; you will hear the tale of the eight Scots engineers, for example, who came out together, and within a month were all buried together in the green graveyard of Limón. But the yellow fever mosquito is banished, and Limón is a clean port.

The train leaves Puerto Limón daily, at about ten in the morning, and slides through sun-drenched sandy levels where little inlets of the sea run up and streams wander down, and where the handsome, broad-leaved sea-grape spreads a violet shade. Its leaves, cast on the bleached sand, look like red leather plates.

Low-level, swampy country, continues for nearly 20 miles; the line is bordered by the dwellings of Negroes, idle little huts built of wood, unpainted, with their bunch of plantains and oranges at the rickety door. All this region gave trouble to the constructers, and in order to ensure as much security as possible against sudden wash-outs, torrential rains when rivers change their courses or tear down bridges, every bolt and tie is of steel. The observation car looks out upon tropic swamp, high woodland, and rivers, but there is not a single town all the way to the capital; the branch tracks lead only to plantations.

From the hot coastal belt the line rises, after an hour. The insect-ridden coco-nut and banana country is left behind, the air grows cooler, and presently a bright silver torrent is seen, running and jumping down to the sea. The railway track has entered the valley of the Reventazón, and this capricious and turbulent river is the train's sparring partner, tearing out the track and eating bits of embankment now and again. At the famous Devil's Elbow you look over the brink of a little precipice and see the Reventazón transformed into a boiling

fury, a perfect Undine's uncle of a river. Twisted and rusted rails, victims of the river during a rainy season, sprawl at the bottom of the gorge.

Before the line reaches San José it has to climb the mountain barrier nearly 5,000 feet high; then comes a gradual descent of more than 1,000 feet, to the capital, 3,500 feet above sea-level, the track winding through hills from which much of the primeval forest has been ruthlessly cut away—with a marked effect upon climate.

Half an hour before one reaches San José at four o'clock in the afternoon, the train stops at the first upland town approached from the eastern or rather northern side; this is the old capital, Cartago, from which President Carrillo moved to San José in the year 1838.

Before the month of May, 1910, Cartago was a gently somnolent city, lacking its ancient governmental and business activities, but retaining grace, peace, and displaying fine old red-tiled colonial houses on either side of its grass-grown, cobbled streets. But upon a fatal day came earth tremors, and a strong movement that uplifted the whole city, shook it, and brought it down as a pile of rubbish. I have heard it said that that final ruinous shake lasted less than thirty seconds, and it seems to be true that the majority of the people killed on that day were struck by the flying tiles from the roofs of houses.

Ten days later, I walked up and down those wrecked streets and marvelled at the clean sweep that the earthquake had made. Not a single house stood beside the pearly cobbled streets, where, here and there, a tiny stream ran tinkling, but everywhere lay piles of smashed, pink brick, of mortar rubble, of carmine tiles: the railway station and the new, unroofed cathedral were little hurt. Families were housed under little shelters of canvas and zinc, uncomplaining, cooking their beans and plantain on a charcoal fire in the open. Probably none but the poor or broken remained here—San José opened its doors generously to refugees—but a month afterwards new buildings began to go up. Later, an ordinance forbade the roofing of houses with tiles, and advised the use of timber, of concrete and reinforced cement, in building. Wherefore the

new streets of Costa Rica may be more secure, but lack charm to the outward eye.

Amongst the ruins of Cartago in 1910 was the gaunt structural ironwork of the Peace Palace that Andrew Carnegie presented for the housing of the Central American Court of Justice. That useful body was created in 1907, with the United States as foster-mother, and during the experimental ten years of its existence performed valuable work. But when Nicaragua signed away Canal rights to the United States, suit was brought against Nicaragua in the court by Salvador, Costa Rica and Honduras, whose territorial rights were infringed. The Court gave decision in favour of the appellants; and lacking United States' further support, was not given a further lease of life after 1917.

Cartago, in Gage's day (1637), was found to be "not so poor as in richer places, as Guatemala and Nicaragua, it was reported to be.

"For there we had occasion to inquire after Merchants for Exchange of Gold and Silver, and we found some were very rich, who traded by Land and Sea with Panama, and by Sea with Portobello, Carthagena and Havana, and from thence with Spain. This City may consist of four hundred families, govern'd by a Spanish Governour; it is a Bishop's See, and has in it three Cloisters, two of Fryers and one of Nuns,"

he says, and as, with the passing of time, the strength of the church increased with much landed property in priestly hands, the transition of the seat of government from Cartago to San José, where politicians could start afresh, was an economic matter rather than one based upon sentimental feeling for the new republic. Similar feeling had, in fact, given a strong inner impetus to the movement from Antigua Guatemala, for which the earthquakes of 1771 provided a good, but not all-sufficing excuse; and when Honduras shifted its capital from Comayagua to Tegucigalpa after Independence there was left behind an intrenched clericalism that followed only lamely to the new site.

The Vale of Cartago is quite beautiful. Not only is there the clean beauty of distant volcanic ranges, but the near sweetness of cornfields, bordered by stone walls like those of Corn-

wall, assisting the illusion with their climbing wreaths of blackberries and wild roses. But, calling you back to Central America, here are ranks of tall plants of *siempre alegre* with their spikes of pale bells and bluish, fleshy leaves edged like the tarts that the Queen of Hearts made. Pin upon your wall one of these generous leaves, and in a month little plants will have grown between every scallop of the edges.

The volcanic ranges of Costa Rica belong to a different and a more recent series, according to geologists, than the great system traversing Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. The Costa Rican system dominates part of Panama, in a series of crescent-shaped curves, their inner bowl towards Mexico and their back to the Panama isthmus. Great fiery peaks, pushed up from the crests of the main ridges, have been pouring out lava and ash since the Eocene age, creating blankets that, aided by deep forests, mask the naked shape of Central America.

None of the peaks of Costa Rica attain the height of the tallest volcanoes of Guatemala, but they are not far below. Lovely Irazú scales about 11,325 feet; Turrialba, nearly 11,000 feet; the tumbled fastnesses of the Chiripo Grande range, running towards Panama and never yet explored, appear to rise to more than 12,000 feet, dwindling at the Cerro Pando to less than 7,000. Iscazú does not stand higher than 6,000 feet, and Orosí is estimated at about 5,000. All these, except Orosí, lie more towards the Atlantic than the Pacific, but guarding the central plains and valleys is a lower Pacific coast series of hills, pushing out into the sea three promontories, each an old centre of native population: Nicoya, Burica and Osa. These mountains are mineral-sown, but the only gold mine operated on a big scale of late years is the Abangarez group, in the hills twenty-five miles north of Puntarenas, and some twenty miles inland.

Over on the long green Atlantic slope of Costa Rica, and upon similar regions of more than one of her Central American neighbours, seepages of petroleum have proved a will-o'-the-wisp again and again; intrigues of contending companies caused the downfall of an excellent President of Costa Rica a few years ago. But it seems fairly certain that there is no oil in commercial quantities between Mexico and the great

northerly belt of South America. As far as Costa Rica is concerned, her great wealth remains the fertility of the upland valleys and plains, healthy, sweet and productive.

The four chief centres of Costa Rican population are all clustered upon these central uplands—old Cartago, Alajuela and Heredia, and the capital, San José.

San José is a pleasant, a friendly, city; everybody likes it, and the Costariccenses, of Spanish blood generally pure, live in agreeable and frank intercourse with the many resident foreigners—diplomatic and consular officers, bankers, agents of international companies, comerciantes and planters. The city is small, with a population of about 40,000; the houses are low-built, as a precaution against earth tremors, and the only really pretentious building is the National Theatre, copied from a Paris model; its cost, something like £150,000, is told to visitors with pride, and with pride also are displayed the pale marble staircases, the gildings and paintings of foyer and reception rooms, the costly velvet carpets and silk draperies. The annual ball given by the President is San José's great social function, where the really lovely *josefinas* (girls of San José) make their *entrée* into society.

Not that you, or the youth of the capital, need wait a year to see these famous pink cheeks and celebrated blue eyes. The pretty aristocrats are not secluded here as in some cities of Central America. They walk the streets in couples, trimly dressed in tailor-made clothes, are to be seen every afternoon in restaurants where tea is served in English fashion, and stroll about the plaza later on listening to the fine band, and of course perfectly oblivious to the eyes of the young men, strolling in the opposite direction. There is no Indian and no Negro population here. The lack of the former deprives San José of the dark charm of Guatemala; the lack of the latter deprives San José of a certain air of luxury that frequently results from the presence of numbers of willing hewers of wood, drawers of water—and first-class cooks; wherever in the Americas there is a Negro element, there is the home of good cooking, from New Orleans to Bahia in Brazil.

But on the other hand, there is a heartening absence of servility, and there is no race problem. Costa Rica is short of

people, but she has no great spaces to fill, and prefers to rely upon gradual growth from within.

The fortunes of the country depend very considerably upon the world market for coffee, now that bananas have been eclipsed, and even the renowned cocoa of the Matina valley does not always fetch its price in international centres flooded by the West African supply. With hard times, governmental revenues suffer, but the estate-owner of a country where love of the soil is a Spanish inheritance does not feel poverty with bitterness; there is always plenty of home-grown foods, and Costa Rica has built up a system of little farms, farms of the poor man, that create a national safeguard.

Quantities of beautiful flowers are grown in San José. Not only are these such rose gardens as that of the great Montealegre family, but the market is full of flowers, every departing traveller has flowers showered in enormous bouquets into car and carriage, the hotel fills your table with them; and amongst all the wealth of blossoms, this is the great Central American region for orchids. Many foreigners make collections, hang the patios with the lovely sprays of the white "Santi Spiritus," rosy and mauve Cattleyas, the flat blue Vannas, and the long trails of Odontoglossums; fine hunting-grounds are in the cool but sheltered pockets of mountain valleys. Costa Rican flora owes a special debt to one great traverser of such wilds as the beautiful valley of the Sarapiquí, running down to the San Juan River, the immortal Pittier.

The National Museum in San José de Costa Rica is well furnished with representative antiquities of the country, particularly pottery, stone implements, and jadeite ornaments; there is an excellent collection of stone grave-lids with carved bands of decoration running round the edges; of the stone "altars" or stools of the Guetar folk; and in another section of the museum, not shown without special permission, is a very fine collection of beautiful gold ornaments, chiefly of the Talamanca and Chorotega folk.

Generally speaking, the artistic, historical and ethnographical treasures of Central America are found outside rather than inside the museums: Costa Rica presents the great exception to this rule. There are no ancient temples or pre-Spanish

cities in this republic—nothing that brings the people south of Nicaragua into the category of the great builders of the Maya or Aztec areas; but for skill and precision in stone working, and in the very perfection of the potter's art, Costa Rica stands second to none. I will go further and say that certain examples of the pottery of Southern Costa Rica, of the Chiriquí type, are the finest specimens of pottery produced without a wheel that the world has ever seen.

Just as Costa Rica is the meeting-ground of the flora and fauna of North America and South America, she was the meeting-place of races and cultures, and for this reason one must remember, in wandering through the well-kept and arranged cases of this model museum, that here are displayed the cultural products of three main peoples. In North-eastern Costa Rica, upon the sweet and fertile peninsula of Nicoya, was an intrusive group of Nahuatl-speaking folk who must have emigrated from, or through, Mexico. In Central Costa Rica were the Guetar tribes, of different speech and customs; and in the south were the Talamanca people, speaking a tongue akin to South American languages, and making their domestic pottery and the gold ornaments in which they delighted upon patterns common to the country which is now Colombia. Upon the west coast are such strong traces of Peruvian influence that it is impossible to doubt that there was regular intercourse by sea between the southerly part of Central America and the traders of pre-Spanish Peru. Before the arrival of the Spanish, when the population of the whole area of Central America was diminished in bulk and restricted in movement, long interior trails were kept open; and it is due to this constant journeying of pedlars that especially popular pottery was carried from one district to another. One finds, for example, painted ware characteristically Costa Rican, in the burial mounds on the islands of Lake Nicaragua. The ancient folk of Central America had an eye for lovely pottery and fine woven and embroidered cloths, and the beautiful ceramics of Costa Rica were famous centuries before the museums of the world began to display specimens in their cases.

From Nicoya the San José museum has a magnificent collection of this ware. Big, almost globular vases with a spread-

ing base are beautifully fired, covered with a fine cream slip and boldly painted with intricate figures, frequently based upon animal and human motifs. From Nicoya, too, comes deliciously worked jade, neck ornaments and small implements; one grave alone in Nicoya yielded, says Joyce, more worked jade than all the rest of Central America put together. The source of this jade, or jadeite, has not yet been found.

Also from Nicoya are some very fine *metates*—curved stone miniature tables upon which the Central American housewife still rubs, with a stone roller, the boiled grains of maize, or black beans, to reduce them to a paste and free them from the skins. Specimens in the Costa Rica museum are elaborately worked, with the four feet fretted, and an ornamental animal head at one end.

The finest private ethnographical collection is in the gracious house of the Archbishop of Costa Rica.

Do not leave San José without going out to La Sabana. A sabana (or savannah, *anglice*) is a level plain, and here is one upon which you can walk as if upon a moorland at home.

An electric tram-car runs out to the Sabana. In a few minutes the shopping streets of the city are left behind, and here is a string of pretty houses with real glass in the windows; the sight of it begins to create the illusion that the Costa Rican capital is not in the tropics after all. And what is more, there are gardens in front of the houses full of bushes covered with pink and red roses, while orchids hang their long sprays of flowers from dainty baskets.

Beyond these orderly houses the car runs out and suddenly presents a view of a dramatic mountain, of an extraordinary vivid green, slashed with brilliant blue ravines. Here is no smooth and hoary head, but a bright and crumpled peak that looks oddly new and fresh; as the line follows the opening of the savannah one sees that on the opposite side of this plain is another guarding mountain barrier, more distant, of less lively colours, its serrations veiled by a scarf of white cloud. The tram-line ends. Descend and choose a path—here are green grassy roads crossing the open country, running away to the low foothills, or losing themselves in leafy lanes, where the deep, close-ranked green spells coffee, and a pink and blue

house peeps between orange-trees. Over the savannah, among the coarse grass, runs a network of creeping mimosas of the sort called "sensitive" because, however lightly your hand is passed over them, the leaves close in a few seconds; the flowers are fluffy balls of pale rose as big as a marble.

Walk down this lane across the savannah and see a little coffee plantation—a very different thing from one of the great commercial estates of businesslike São Paulo, down south in Brazil, with its miles and miles of unshaded trees grown upon flaming red soil. Here the ground is soft with the fine, powdery grey-mauve volcanic ash of Central America; there are hedges twined with roses, and over the heads of each little jewel of a coffee shrub are spread the delicate, feathery leaves of the pink-flowered *madre de café*.

The first time that I walked these pleasant lanes, with the sun filtered by over-arching trees, the coffee was in full bloom, a myriad of waxy, scented flowers on each laterally-trained branch. I walked in, found myself near the open veranda of a pink-washed 'dobe, low-built house, apologized to a pretty young woman who was washing clothes on a stone slab, and was at once made free of the finca. After that, I always called upon this jolly little estate-house whenever I was in San José, finding the doors always open, the sun always shining, and Doña Luisa smiling; in the days when the coffee berries, round and crimson-red, are ready for picking, the lanes are dustier, that is all. Between the rows runs a thread of water—there is a little fall near by, and although Doña Luisa's lavandera may wash her fat baby's garments upon a stone according to ancient custom, there is an electric light bulb swinging in the veranda.

CHAPTER XX

VOLCANOES AND THE PACIFIC COAST

Ascent of Volcan Poás—Alajuela—San Pedro—Old Craters—Th Sulphur Lake—Puntarenas—The *Bueyeros*—Los Esteros.

FROM more than one peak of Central America both oceans can be seen. One of these high-soaring volcanoes is Poás in Costa Rica, with a summit nearly 9,000 feet high.

Its heart is still hot, and still sufficiently active to cast out showers of sulphurous spray, that many a time has wrought damage to distant laundry spread out to bleach in the city of San José. The crater of Poás is almost circular, and from the edge one looks down 1,300 feet to a creamy, seething lake.

The ascent from San José is easy enough; every year in the dry season visitors ride this trail. It is a two-days' trip, and one needs thick woollen wraps to counteract the chilly air of the high altitude. No time of the year is better than January, and you must prepare for a short train journey, a night at a country hostelry, a horseback ride, and a fairly stiff climb on foot.

Our party left the capital one January afternoon, took the railway to old Alajuela, charming example of an old Spanish city, and famous, like its sister Heredia, for its distinguished families. Some of the noblest Spanish escutcheons of Central America were carved upon the houses of these two old towns, still delightful, but to-day out of the modern stream. Alajuela and Heredia have preserved the flavour of the colonial centuries, the flavour that Cartago lost in the ruins made by the earthquake, and which San José, with less than 100 years' dignity, never possessed.

Horses were waiting at Alajuela. We rode about the

haunted streets, stony and silent, bordered with fine old houses of great pride, and then for two hours traversed country lanes to the village of San Pedro de Poás, a village catering for mountaineers in the spirit of an Alpine townlet. Here we ate chicken stewed with pimiento, plus the inevitable black beans that every good Costarricense is said to carry in his trunks when he travels, and juicy oranges; drank delicious coffee, went to bed directly afterwards, and slept until midnight.

Then a remorseless mozo thumped upon our doors, we crawled shivering into our clothes, and by one o'clock were in the saddle, following a path bathed in the aquamarine moonlight of Central America. Beyond this hamlet of San Pedro there are no inns, and mountain-climbers must carry food—bread, country cheese, block chocolate, and a spirit lamp for heating water to add to your coffee essence, are the first necessities. From the pleasant fields of San Pedro the road presently rose, hedges disappeared, and we were crossing slopes of the volcano, covered with rich green grass and watered by innumerable tinkling brooks. Far above, these long ascending meadows gave place to thick woods, ink-black in the light of the moon; the topmost peak of Poás was hidden in a moving veil of pale cloud.

After three hours' riding we came upon the Lecheria, the Dairy, and dismounted. This is the last outpost of settlement upon the sides of the volcano. The horses could climb safely no farther, so here they were left, and we began to walk. The trail grew steep, plunged into a forest so deep and matted that the moonlight was shut out, while the boggy mud clung to our feet. Buttresses of huge trees and enormous twisting roots, as well as low-swinging tangled lianas, obscured the path.

Soon after half-past five that morning, with dawn wavering in a clear sapphire sky, we came out to open ground. The forest lay just below, a sombre mass, and near at hand was no vegetation but a little thin grass and a sprinkling of myrtillaceous shrubs. We crossed the shallow saucer of an extinct crater; five or six of these older outlets have served their day, choked with lava and stones, and become innocuous as the underground fires sought other exits. Cattle are driven up to these old craters to feed upon the rich grass, and a score

of different kinds of orchid-hung trees border, but do not intrude upon, the basin. Beyond this point we presently reached the true summit of Poás, then passed by another extinct crater, and just as dawn filled the sky with a sudden wave of blush-pink, we stood upon the margin of the live vent.

Here, with the strong smell of sulphur fumes in the air, we looked down more than 1,300 feet to the ominously-shifting heavy, cream-coloured crater lake of the burning mountain.

Vegetation, the ubiquitous myrtles and thorny scrub of América Centrál, crowded to the very lip of this crater; but there all green things stopped abruptly. The scored sides are pale-tinted, the rock and soil bleached by the sulphur, stained tawny-red and orange and yellow by the fumes and spray. No life can endure within this crater wall, and if you would descend part of this threatening precipice you must choose a time when Poás is quiescent. From the top all that can be seen is a seamed and stepped circular well, enclosing, far below, a sinister pool. This pool is viscid, stirring and shifting ominously as some internal heaving freed a jet of yellow, hovering sulphur-charged steam.

The sun rose with a magic flash, illuminating all the peak. We retreated from that perilous brink, boiled water and drank coffee, and then attacked the descent of the crater. It is not so bad as it looks: the deeply scored and folded sides lend foothold, the soil is, although fine and dusty, and too yielding for comfort, a guarantee of safety. Starting about eight o'clock, we reached the evil-appearing edge in about two hours and found it too hot to touch; the return climb took nearly three hours.

The two oceans were visible for about five minutes, before distance was hidden by mist; but if any traveller is prepared to camp out to await the perfect day for such a sight, he can rely upon one aid, the presence of a pool of sweet water, untainted by the fumes of Poás, a few hundred yards from the live crater.

Puntarenas is Costa Rica's Pacific entry, and to my mind is the most agreeable of all the western ports of Central America. San José de Guatemala has certain attractions, relying on the

long, thundering green rollers and the freshness of its evening breeze to counteract its queer forlornness, the dishevelled poverty, of its huts, a human poverty with which the serene magnificence of the blue volcanoes contrasts so strangely.

But Puntarenas (whose name of course means "sandy point," but is spelled by Costa Ricans in one word to distinguish it from its namesake of Chile, the Magellanic city of Punta Arenas) has the charm of an old, frequented place. During all the Colonial period a road was open from Cartago to the Guanacaste region, where ships from Panama and Mexico called, and after the decline of the Portobello fair and of practically all the Isthmian ports on the Caribbean side, the result not only of the unhealthiness of the eastern coast but of the raids of determined pirates firmly ensconced upon the islands of the West Indies, this route developed as the great highway for merchandise. Until the building of the railroad between San José and the Pacific, of which scraps were constructed from 1875 onwards, the main section being opened in the early part of the present century, a carriage road was kept in such excellent order that not only ox-carts but the fine carriages of wealthy Costarricenses constantly made the journey. Not for these aristocrats were the little, mud and thatch, whitewashed inns, which still punctuate the road at a distance of every twenty-two kilometres—a day's journey for carters; these were primarily established for the use of the *bueyeros*, the drivers, frequently the owners, of the big lumbering, solid-wheeled carts drawn by *bueyes* (oxen). These bueyeros constitute a class still important and independent, and formerly so powerful that when first the government of Costa Rica, about 1875, decided to build a line to duplicate the road to the Pacific, and began according to the dictates of common sense to work from the port at which the rails and rolling-stock were landed, the bueyeros beheld their business in life as threatened, and rose in wrath. Eventually they squeezed from the government a promise to start the line from the highlands at the same time, and to give the hauling of railway material for this purpose to the ox-cart men. And this was done. While a fourteen-mile strip was constructed between Puntarenas and the village of Esparta, another scrap of about the same length

was built from Cartago to San José and thence to Alajuela; every rail and locomotive-part was laboriously hauled fifty miles, from sea-level to the 4,000-feet mountain passes, by the triumphant bueyeros. Little wonder that nothing more was done for a generation, and that until 1903 the fashionable folk of the capital, escaping to dry warmth and floods of sunshine from the uplands after four or five tedious months of rain, descended to the Pacific by carriage and on horseback. The old road runs through the undulations of four-and-twenty miles of savannah country, abruptly down the 500-feet gorge of the Rio Grande, up the barrier mountains to pretty Atenas, and down the lovely slope to Santo Domingo, where the coast strip of hot land begins. On the sandy arm where the port lies the breezes of the Gulf of Nicoya blow night and morning, and here in February and March came, to camp out in frail little balconied houses with red-tiled roofs, the charming *josefinas* with their families, to dance and play the guitar, to bathe in the milky Pacific, and to go for boating picnics to the long green water-lanes of the Esteros, the multiplied inlets of the beautiful Gulf. Jolly days indeed, with every one friendly, and all the luxuries of the capital transported to the Pacific shores.

"Bamboos, palms and ferns grow here with extraordinary vigour," says Ricardo Fernandez Guardia. "In the trees, leafy and wide-spreading, are nested orchids of many colours, while the thirsty shrubs, seeking a cool refuge, thrust their branches into the water. Whenever we turned a corner, wild herons rose, startled; some, white as cotton, some grey or pink, and all presently resuming their interrupted fishing. The thick foliage robs the sun of fierceness. And suddenly all the air vibrates with a note, clear, penetrating, yet full of voluptuous sweetness, the sonorous voice of the marimba, indispensable companion of holidays in Puntarenas." These days are past: the gilded youth of Costa Rica to-day looks to Paris and the Riviera for days of pleasure; but that freemasonry of Costa Rican inner society, where all families are intimate from childhood and most are akin, retains its strength. And Puntarenas wears its old pleasant air. Along the beach, the road nothing but ancient sand, sun-drenched, is strewn a succession of in-

souciant wooden houses, trailing with bright-blossomed creepers, shaded with mangoes and coco-nuts and glossy amates, jocotes with bare boughs and red fruit, handsome breadfruit and big cactus; the scavenger crows, zopilotes, stalk morosely by the waterside or perch on the roofs with their wings held out to dry. In many houses are careless little shops, kept by Negroes, where you can buy sea-fans and pearl-shell and a handful of seed-pearls; strings of grey Job's tears threaded with the little red beans with a black patch that the West Indian calls "Black-eyed Susan"; and other necklaces of those delicious flowerets that Costa Rica knows as "Siempreviva." And "always alive" they are. I have a string of them, acquired more than ten years ago, that lies, red-rust coloured, in the bottom of an old box. When February hail beats at a grey London window, I take this flower chain and soak it in water; in half an hour the flowers, in shape like little cowslips, have swelled to twice their size, have taken on a bright orange hue, and the cluster of stamens shows freshly yellow; the water is stained to a daffodil tint, and a warm perfume fills the room, a perfume as perennial as the charm of pretty, lazy, Puntarenas.

CHAPTER XXI

DISCOVERY AND CONQUEST OF COSTA RICA

The Conquest—Columbus' Fourth Voyage—Veragua—Gil Gonzalez—Pacific Coast Discoveries—Nicoya—Marbella Fortress—Diego Gutierrez—The Suerre River—Cavallón—Vasquez de Coronado—Reduction of Pacific Tribes—Cartago Founded—Condition of Settlers—Drake—Artieda—Talamanca again.

THE conquest of Costa Rica was a prolonged and terrible business, never concluded, and only presenting a surface accomplishment in definite areas of the central crease after the lapse of long periods of time. The struggle was with the unhealthy climate of the coast, with the forests and mountains, as much as with the bold and irreconcilable Indians; and if, at the end of 400 years of colonization, the settled areas of the upland valleys are able to boast a population of white stock of a purity unusual in the Americas, it is because the native tribes would neither work for the conquerors nor, if they could help it, serve as basis for a half-caste race. But, to form that white population of Cartago and San José, Heredia and Alajuela and the beautiful plantations that form the centres of scores of small villages, what floods of the best Spanish blood were drained from the mother country, what lives cruelly ended in suffering and disillusion, what treasure of energy and courage and wit, what material riches, were irretrievably lost.

Expenditure in Costa Rica, chiefly along the Atlantic coastal strip running to and joining with the present Panama Republic, of more useless and more costly effort than in other regions of Central America, was due in greatest measure to the half-crazy obsession of Columbus; his mind clouded by gold-

lust, he magnified the low-grade ornaments of coast Indians into splendid jewels, indicative of rich mines, fought for the ownership of the fatal coast until the day of his death, and left behind an illusion that wrecked more adventurous youth than the tale of El Dorado.

"Gold," wrote Columbus, to the Catholic Kings, "is the most excellent of metals. With gold we can not only do whatever we please in this world, but we can use it to snatch souls from Purgatory and to people Paradise."

It was in 1502 that Columbus, on his fourth and last voyage, skirted the coast of Costa Rica. Running from Santo Domingo, he anchored off a headland of Honduras, on August 14th, doubled and named Cape Gracias á Dios a month later, and came to anchor again, at a point between an island for which he got the name "Quiribiri," and a coast village, Cariay. It has been suggested that Cariay was identical with the present position of Port Limón, but the appearance of Cariay upon a map as early as 1570 plainly shows Cariay at the mouth of the San Juan River of Nicaragua, practically on the site of Greytown.

These people were not nomads; Columbus saw big *palenques* or palaces well built of wood and matted reeds, and graves where the dead, embalmed and adorned with fine garments and gold necklets, lay in state; he records the sight of crucibles and forges of silversmiths, and says that the clothes of the villagers were not only embroidered but painted.

Before reaching this coast, Columbus had seized a boat, off the island of Guanaja, which must have belonged to Yucatec traders; it was eight feet wide, covered with a waterproof awning of mats, and was full of merchandise—cotton cloth, cacao, hatchets and discs of copper, wooden swords with stone edges, of the typical Mexican pattern. The Admiral seized an old man as guide, inquired for gold, and heard then of Zorobaró, rich in mines. To find it, Columbus must have coasted Costa Rica; on October 6th he entered Almirante Bay, now in the territory of Panama, and, unfortunately, he beheld upon the shore a group of natives who wore about their necks circular plaques of gold, and gold ornaments in the shape of eagles. Questioned by the Cariay patriarch, the Indians

said that the gold came from a place two days' journey inland; this, then, was the golden Zorobaró. Farther on, in Chiriquí Lagoon, more gold plaques were bartered from coast Indians. Past the island afterwards called the Escudo de Veragua, he found other villages and natives, all with a certain quantity of gold, and got a name that he spelled "Veragua" at one little town, said to be at the border of the gold country. However, he went on to the mouth of the Belén River, founded the ill-fated colony of Santa Maria de Belén, and then went back to Spain, his head full of dreams of the gold mines of Veragua. He stubbornly concealed its exact location, insisted upon having its government given to him, and, in the middle of a state quarrel, died. His son Diego then started a lawsuit against the Crown, but meanwhile Ferdinand, reigning alone after the death of Isabella, and perhaps seeing the inconvenient claims of Colón with a slightly different eye, gave the government of Veragua to the rich, noble and gracious Diego de Nicuesa. A more southerly strip ("Nueva Andalucia") of this miasmic, mosquito-haunted, foodless coast was handed at the same time and also as a mark of great favour to the gallant Alonso de Ojeda, who made his chief settlement in the Gulf of Urabá or Darien.

Diego de Nicuesa's settlers suffered shipwreck, hunger and sickness, and within a few short months the brilliant expedition was reduced from 700 to 60 men, gathered for fear of the now entirely hostile Indians at the little fort of Nombre de Dios; Nicuesa himself was lost at sea after a quarrel with his colony in 1511. Two years later Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, climbing a hill upon the Panama isthmus, caught sight of the Pacific Ocean; but before the news of his discovery reached Spain the King had interested himself in another expedition to the wonderful Veragua, where gold was so plentiful that people fished it up with nets, so said rumour. The Governor and Captain-General of the new colony, "Golden Castile" (Castilla del Oro) was Pedro Arias de Avila, a shrewd, experienced courtier and soldier, a colonel sixty years old. Pedrarias soon got Vasco Nuñez out of the way by the simple expedient of cutting off his head, in January of 1519; he then crossed to the western coast, founded Panama in August of the same year, and began

THE RIVER REVENTAZÓN, COSTA RICA

to send expeditions of discovery up the coast. In this way were found the peninsulas of Burica and Nicoya, and the two big gulfs, Dulce and Nicoya; but the glory and reward of land discovery was reserved for a new rival of Pedrarias, the kindly and resourceful Gil Gonzalez de Avila, who was, in June, 1519, given a licence from the King to explore for 3,000 miles along the Pacific, west and north of Panama. Pedrarias put what obstacles he could in the young man's way, but Gil Gonzalez had had experience of the tropical American regions as Auditor of Santo Domingo, and he brought with him all materials for shipbuilding, except timber; carts and yokes of oxen; and skilled workmen. With these he crossed the Isthmus of Panama, opening a road from the fever-stricken, dwindling port of Acla, and at the mouth of the Balsas River, in the Gulf of San Miguel, built four little ships and sailed for the Pearl Islands. Here his ships went to pieces; undaunted, he started again, built four more vessels on the islands, and eventually started off in January, 1522, for the richest harvest of gold extracted without serious loss of life or injury to the native folk ever recorded during the Conquest.

Landing on the Chiriquí coast, he marched a party by land while the pilot Andres Niño sailed along the Pacific, known at this time to the Spaniards as the *Mar del Sur*, Sea of the South, as the Atlantic was commonly called the *Mar del Norte*, Sea of the North. From Chiriquí, now within the limits of Panama Republic, Gil Gonzalez marched along the Costa Rican littoral, rounding the head of the Gulf of Nicoya, and, upon the peninsula, arriving at the populous settlement of the "Cacique" of Nicoya. The cacique showed no fight; on the contrary, he welcomed Gil Gonzalez, immediately admitted the reasonableness of the Spaniards' demand that the King of Spain should be acknowledged as paramount Chief and that old religions should be cast aside for Christianity. Here was, as a matter of fact, one of the enclaves of Nahuatl-speaking folk that were dotted throughout Central America; news of the invasion and ruin of Mexico by Cortés had no doubt penetrated by the trade routes, and the Nicoyans thought discretion the better part. The cacique, his wives, and 6,000 of the tribe were baptized, and Gil Gonzalez received, as presents, ornaments worth

14,000 castellanos, and six golden images of gods, each over a hand's length in size, which the cacique said he wanted no longer, since he was now a Christian. And so, with feasting and mutual courtesies, he sped the Spaniard on his way. The expedition continued north, keeping west of the cordilleras, until somewhere in the neighbourhood of Orosí volcano they heard tales of a cacique so powerful and so rich that the desire to see his realm was irresistible, few as were Gonzalez' followers; for of the 500 people who had embarked at the Pearl Islands, the great majority were Indians, only sixty able-bodied Spaniards remaining.

A few miles more, and the Spaniards had for the first time entered the region that is now Nicaragua; for Nicarao, the astute chief of yet another strong enclave of Nahuatl people, lived upon the site of the present sun-baked, silent little town of Rivas, a couple of miles south-east of the margin of the great lake, and directly on a travelled road running from the lake to the Pacific. Nicarao met the Spaniard pleasantly, and gave him gold worth 15,000 castellanos, receiving in return a red cap and a silk gown. He showed no resentment when Gil Gonzalez rode his horse into the lake waters, sword in hand, taking possession in the name of King Ferdinand, nor did he raise any objection to the baptizing of himself, his family and some 9,000 of his subjects. One suspects that Nicarao's theological questioning had a spice of malice in it: How big were the stars and sun and moon? How were they moved and held up in the sky? Why was it dark at night, and wouldn't it be better if there was no dark and no cold? Just where was a man's soul? Was the Pope a mortal being? Was the great Spanish King mortal also? And, shrewdest thrust of all, why did such a few men as those of Gil Gonzalez' party want such a tremendous lot of gold? He professed satisfaction with the replies, and the Spaniard marched onwards, finding six other villages, each with about 2,000 people, where he again received presents—plenty of food, Indians to use as bearers, and gold worth over 33,000 castellanos. All these people discreetly accepted baptism.

Of another mind was the cacique Diriagen, who came to visit Gil Gonzalez with a tremendous display of 500 servants

carrying turkeys, and a personal entourage of women covered with discs of gold, slaves with trumpets and banners, and chief men of the tribe, panoplied and bearing golden axes. Diriagen said boldly that he had come to look at the bearded strangers, and, invited to become a Christian, said he would think it over and return in three days. He did return, but with his warriors in fighting kit, and although the few remaining horsemen of the invaders put the naked Indians to rout, Gil Gonzalez saw the danger of his situation, began a retreat, and was thus able to test the sincerity of the convert Nicarao, whose armies harassed the path southwards. Without more loss than that of runaway Indian carriers, however, the captain pushed to the coast, found Andres Niño's ships at anchor, recently arrived from an expedition whose discoveries included the Gulfs of Fonseca and Tehuantepec, and so sailed back to Panama, in June, 1523. The gold ornaments, quickly reduced to ingots, were worth at least the equivalent of £120,000, in the currency of 1924.

To the lands which he had discovered Gil Gonzalez never returned; he eluded the greedy hands of Pedrarias, got safely across the Isthmus and to Española with his treasure, sent a messenger to Spain with the royal Fifth, received the approbation of the Crown, got together another expedition and set his helm for the east coast of Central America. He thus avoided Pedrarias and also was able to look for the "Estrecho Dudoso," the doubtful strait to the Sea of the South which should take the Spanish to the Spice Isles and Cathay. He landed in the Golfo Dulce, in early 1524, and, founding the precarious little town of San Gil de Buenavista, thus made the first Spanish settlement in Guatemala. Here, months later, Cortés found the wretched remnant of his settlers, starving and in despair.

Gil Gonzalez went on south, or rather east, along the coast of Honduras to the Olancho valley, but here his little force was surprised by Hernan de Soto (explorer of Florida and discoverer of the Mississippi), coming overland from Nicaragua at the instance of a lieutenant of Pedrarias. Although de Soto's force was routed, Gil Gonzalez thought it well to retreat upon the little harbour now called Puerto Cortés, and then inland

to fertile Naco, where presently Cristobal de Olid arrived and made him prisoner, where Francisco de las Casas was presently added to this extraordinary meeting, and where Cristobal de Olid was shortly afterwards surprised and killed by his two prisoners. Francisco de las Casas took the unfortunate Gil Gonzalez in chains to Mexico, sent him to Spain, and there, before this humane explorer could present his excellent case, he died, in 1526.

So ended the first discoverer of Costa Rica's and Nicaragua's west coast; but meanwhile Pedrarias, his mouth watering for the gold of Nicoya and Nicarao, obtained money from the same trio of partners who later financed the conquest of Peru (the priest, Fernando de Luque, Diego de Almagro, and Francisco Pizarro), and sent a force by sea in charge of Francisco Hernández de Córdoba. This captain made short work of the amiable Indians of the Nicoya peninsula, dividing them out like flocks of sheep amongst the settlers who elected to create a town, Bruselas, near the modern Puntarenas. This was in early 1524. From Bruselas the lieutenant of Pedrarias proceeded to Nicaragua, where he founded the city of Granada on the margin of the great lake Cosibolca, and, near the second big lake, Managua, established the first city of León, close to other convenient centres of Indian population.

Building a fort in Granada, Hernández de Córdoba felt himself secure and determined to ignore Pedrarias thenceforth and to place Nicaraguan affairs directly under the control of the Audiencia of Santo Domingo, then the sole great authority, legal and administrative, in the New World. De Soto objected, was imprisoned in Granada, escaped with a dozen companions to Panama, and roused the septuagenarian Pedrarias by his story. Pedrarias collected forces, sailed to the Gulf of Nicoya, and landed to find that Bruselas no longer existed, the Spanish settlers having been withdrawn by de Córdoba to Granada. The arrest and execution of Hernández de Córdoba quickly followed; Cortés, across the width of the continent, was too much occupied by bad news from Mexico to interfere in this tangle of intrigues, and, returning, left all that part of Central America south of the conquests of Alvarado (Guatemala and Salvador) to the explorers and captains operating with forces

organized in Panama. It was not long before Pedrarias got himself appointed Governor of Nicaragua, controlling at the same time the rich and populous territories about the Gulf of Nicoya, and apportioning the best of those Indians to himself; "those who did not die of fatigue from their employment as beasts of burden were forcibly taken from their lands, branded with hot irons, and, sent to Panama, Peru and elsewhere to be sold as slaves," says Fernández Guardia, historian of Costa Rica. Their submission to the first conquerors did not save them:

> "On the contrary, there was no exaction or outrage of which they were not the victims. Situated as their villages were on the highway from Nicaragua, they were subject to the demands of travellers who seized provisions and carriers, and sold these impressed servants in distant lands."

Not yet was the golden vision dimmed. In 1540 Hernan Sanchez de Badajoz, having returned to Panama laden with riches from Peru, obtained authority to conquer and colonize Veragua; he sailed from Nombre de Dios with sixty Spanish soldiers and some Negro slaves, founded the City of Badajoz at the mouth of the Sixaola River, and upon the Corotapa hills built a fortress, Marbella, overlooking Almirante Bay and the fertile, cultivated valley of Coaza, where the Estrella River runs. At first he succeeded in making friendly alliances with certain caciques who were at war with others, obtained possession of the persons of a number of these tribal lords, and, treating them kindly and plying them with Spanish wines, assured his own food supply; for quantities of maize and cassava, cacao, aguacates and mameys, and honey, peccaries and birds, and the fruit of the pejibay palm, were brought daily by the anxious followers of the imprisoned chiefs. He also was given 6,000 pesos' worth of gold. Hernan Sanchez might have sustained himself for a considerable time: but ill-luck dogged these Caribbean settlements. Trouble came from his own race. For Contreras, the Governor of Nicaragua, son-in-law and successor of Pedrarias, fired by the exploits of two of his explorer captains, Machuca and Calero, who had discovered the Atlantic outlet of the "Desaguadero" (i.e. "Outflow,"

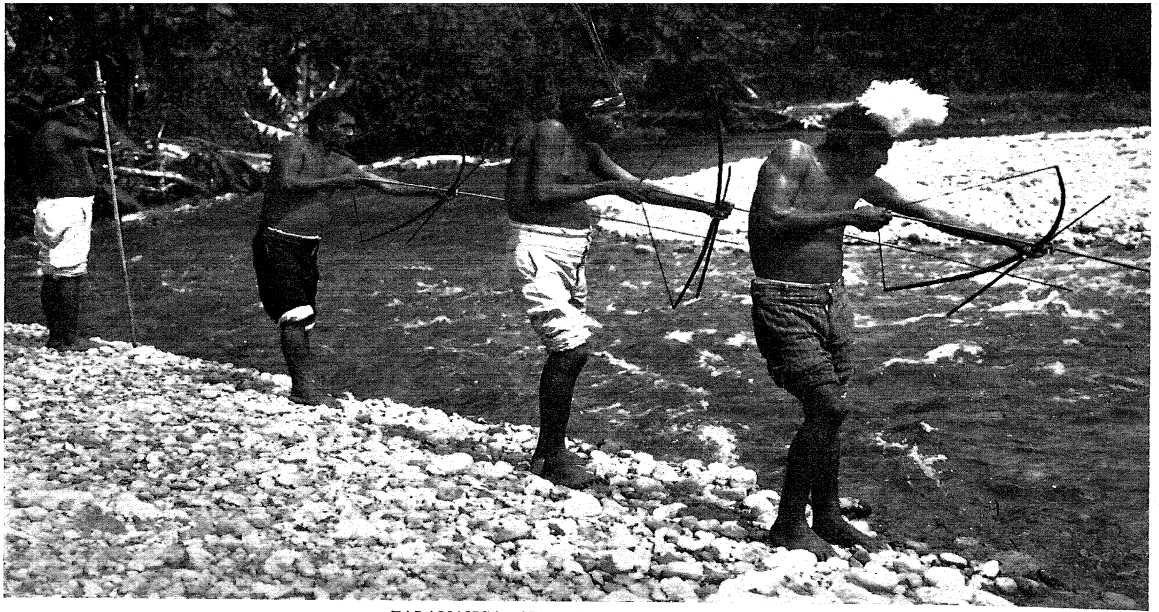
afterwards named the San Juan River), determined to colonize these easterly coasts himself. He prepared a formidable expedition in Granada, sailed down the San Juan River with 90 Spaniards, 400 Nicaraguan Indians (Chichimecas), and some African slaves, made his way along the Costa Rican coast, found Hernan Sanchez in Marbella fort, and laid siege to it. When his defending force was reduced to six men, by sickness, hunger, desertion and capture, Sanchez surrendered, at the beginning of December, 1540; he was "tried" by Contreras, and sent, a ragged and fettered captive, to Spain, where he died six years later in prison.

Contreras stupidly proceeded to antagonize the cacique of Coaza and other chiefs held by Sanchez, torturing and bullying them and permitting the Chichimecas to cut down the pejibay groves and to sacrifice a child of Coaza's tribe.

An onslaught of the local natives was directed against these Chichimecas and, to make matters hopeless, Contreras started the persecution of Sanchez' men. By March of 1541 he had to own his position as untenable, and retreated to Nicaragua, leaving the coast city and fort of Sanchez again abandoned to jungle.

The next seeker for Veragua's gold was Diego Gutierrez, brother of the unfortunate Philip, founder of Concepción; he obtained the King's authority to colonize in such parts of Veragua as were outside the limits of the twenty-five league square assigned to the heirs of Columbus, and anywhere else along the Atlantic coast to the northward of that Dukedom where no other Governor already ruled, as far as Cape Camarón, Honduras; a glance at the map shows that Diego Gutierrez was thus airily permitted to control the littoral of half the present Panama, all Costa Rica, all Nicaragua except the neighbourhood of the mouth of the San Juan River, where Contreras had founded a town, San Juan de la Cruz (afterwards Greytown or San Juan del Norte), and nearly half Honduras. The name Cartago was suggested for this extensive province.

Armed with the royal decree, Gutierrez sailed for Santo Domingo, got horses there, and touched at Jamaica; here a great many men, who had probably heard stories in Santo



TALAMANCA INDIANS, SHOOTING FISH
IN THE OLD VERAGUA REGION

Domingo of the evil repute of Veragua, deserted; the expedition next called at Nombre de Dios, and all the rest of the Spaniards except the nephew of the leader and four companions ran away and took the cobbled road across the Panama forests to the city of Panama, their faces set towards Peru. Gutierrez nevertheless pursued his journey, sailed for Nicaragua, ascended the San Juan River, and appeared in Granada, to the annoyance of Contreras, who at once took exception to the wide authority of Gutierrez, and brought forward to the Council of the Indies his own claim on the Nicaraguan coast, by virtue of the explorations of Calero and Machuca. Controversy filled the air of Granada for two years, but finally agreement was reached and Gutierrez set out from the city in 1543, with sixty men. They sailed down the San Juan, down the Costa Rican coast to the mouth of the Suerre (Reventazón) and, six miles up the channel, founded the town of Santiago. The neighbouring Indians, who first visited them, gave presents of gold and supplied a little maize, presently withdrew, and the colony was at once reduced to starvation: and one morning Gutierrez woke to find that the camp had been abandoned by every living soul except his nephew, a Spanish sailor and a few servants. The deserters made their way by land to San Juan del Norte and were picked up by passing ships. Gutierrez sent his nephew to Nombre de Dios for help, and meanwhile received food and reinforcements from Granada; amongst the men who (about mid 1544) then came from Nombre de Dios was the Italian chronicler, Girolamo Benzoni, who tells some astonishing tales of the spirit of the Indian chiefs with whom Gutierrez dealt when, exploring up the Suerre River, he founded on its left bank the little town of San Francisco. Benzoni did not love the Spaniards, and probably enjoyed writing of that cacique Cocori who, seized and imprisoned by Gutierrez and threatened with death, was

" not at all intimidated, accused him (Gutierrez) of being a liar, since he had often before threatened to kill him and had not done so; he declared that he preferred to die rather than to live in such misery. He said he had come to visit the Governor, relying upon his proferred faith, believing that he would be well treated instead of being so dishonoured: and finally that he could not imagine how Christians could

be such a generation of vipers, committing such great evil wherever they went; he only wondered that the earth could bear them."

Shortly afterwards the Indians near San Francisco cut down their fruit trees, burnt their villages, carried away their stores of grain, and hid in the mountains. Gutierrez was again faced with starvation, and while awaiting the return of his nephew, again sent to Nombre de Dios for help, he marched the healthiest of his men into the hills, where some days later a force of Indians in black and red war paint, armed with lances of palm wood, fell upon and practically annihilated the party. The Governor was the first man killed; a few wounded men escaped back to the river, meeting too late the reinforcements brought from Nombre de Dios. As the bleeding and exhausted men made their way through the woods the triumphant Indians cried out to them through the trees, "Come and take gold, Christians, come and take gold!"

Those who survived made their way into Nicaragua; and thus ended another attempt to colonize Veragua. It was Gutierrez who first insisted upon the name Costa Rica in order to differentiate his domain from that of the contentious heirs of Columbus; and as his appointment had been given, with a salary, from the King, and was also entailed upon his heirs, it was not until 1549 that the son of Gutierrez compromised his claim, ceding the bulk of his rights to Juan Pérez de Cabrera. Juan Pérez had been interim Governor of Honduras, and retained the office of Corregidor of Trujillo when he obtained the appointment of Governor of Cartago. He took 500 men with him, but, arriving in Honduras, he was confronted with the firm order of the Audiencia of Guatemala that the King's command of humane treatment of the Indians should be carried out literally; Pérez immediately resigned the enterprise, and was rewarded for his candid conduct by the Governorship of Honduras.

No more is heard of the Gutierrez heirs. But in 1560 the Audiencia of Guatemala offered authority to colonize and explore in "New Cartago and Costa Rica," whose limits were still vague, to an experienced Spaniard, Juan de Cavallón, who had occupied legal posts in Honduras and Nicaragua. He

accepted, was financed and accompanied by a rich Franciscan friar, Juan de Estrada de Rávago. The padre took a well-equipped force of 300 men in two vessels from Granada by way of the Desaguadero, lost much cargo when crossing Lake Nicaragua and much more on the river's treacherous bar, but went on to Almirante Bay, where, near the present Bocas del Toro, he set up another new city in Veragua, naming it Castillo de Austria. But there was no food to be found, and when the Spaniards went out on foraging expeditions they were boldly attacked by the Indians; it was not long before the padre was forced to abandon his city, moving his settlers to the mouth of the Suerre River. The same troubles pursued them here—no docile natives, no food, and a pitiless climate that sickened the colonists—and presently the survivors made their way to the mouth of the San Juan. Only thirty men returned safely to Granada.

Meanwhile Cavallón had marched along the Pacific border into Nicoya (January, 1561) with ninety Spaniards, droves of horses and mules and a moving storehouse of pigs, cows and goats. At Chomes, a few miles north of Puntarenas, he turned inland, ascended to the Turrucares plateau, and founded the first town of the uplands, Garcimuñoz. But the Costa Rican Indians had harried too many expeditions successfully to submit tamely to this invasion; they waylaid the roads, attacking travellers, punitive forces, and foraging expeditions, and doing all they could to starve the Spaniards out. When Cavallón received an invitation to become the Fiscal (chief legal authority) of the Audiencia in Guatemala he left the country, in January, 1562, leaving in charge his friend the Franciscan friar, who, after returning from his disastrous Atlantic expedition, had gathered a new and well-appointed expedition and brought it overland from Granada.

Now appears upon the scene the great explorer and conqueror of Costa Rica, Juan Vásquez de Coronado, whose extraordinary journeys, conducted with ability and discretion, brought the country into a semblance of control, and whose letters, found in the Archives of Seville by the Costa Rican historian, Manuel M. de Peralta, are full of spirited information. At the time of this new appointment Vásquez de Coronado

was Alcalde Mayor of León in Nicaragua, had aided Cavallón, and knew so much of difficulties in Costa Rica that he was able to write to King Philip II (from León, May, 1562), "Your Majesty may be assured that in Costa Rica there are no peaceful Indians." Nevertheless he set out in the following August "in the season of winter and of great rivers and swamps," with eighty soldiers and settlers.

He had had valuable previous experience; had held official posts in Guatemala, Salvador and Honduras and in the Lacandón country; and he was the brother of that Francisco Vásquez de Coronado who headed an expedition from Mexico in search of the "Seven Cities of Cíbola," long considered fabulous, but now identified with pueblos in the Zuni country of the United States.

Juan Vásquez marched by way of Nicoya, crossed by ship to the little port of Landecho, marched to the nearly abandoned settlement of Los Reyes, and finally arrived at Garcimuñoz to find the Spanish settlers "naked and in need." It was plain that he had to reduce the Indians or abandon New Cartago, so he began a series of carefully organized expeditions, treating with kind words and splendid presents all the chiefs he could reach, and making vigorous war against determinedly hostile tribes. The Guetar tribes of the central plateau were first pacified; next Juan Vásquez bore down upon the Quepos of the Pacific border south of the Pirris River, continuing his march southward to the country of the valiant Cotos, of the mainland near the Osa peninsula. These were settled people with a social organization, says a letter of Juan Vásquez:

"This town is placed upon a mountain spur, and is egg-shaped, narrow at the ends and wider in the middle. There are eighty-four houses, neatly arranged; at each end of the town is one house, then two others to form a triangle, and following these are arrangements of threes, and fours to make squares; each house is very large, and is situated about four feet from the next. The little plazas between each group of four houses are reached by narrow, artificially-constructed lanes, each house being raised above the ground about half a yard and when the enemy crowds into the little courtyard the Cotos of all four houses assail them from the portholes and windows made for

this purpose, without the enemy being able to see their attackers, or from what direction their wounds are inflicted.

"In each house live twenty-five men, with their wives and children, the number varying according to the family. Four hundred men could be contained in every house. When we had taken the first house it was necessary to capture the two following, then the groups of threes and fours, all being built like forts. These houses are circular. The supports (beams) are two fathoms round, and the high roof of straw, beautifully arranged, and running up to a spire.

"The stronghold has two gateways, one to the east and one to the west. North and south are two gorges, deep and rugged, where the Indians cultivate flowers for their pleasure. The fortress is surrounded by two high fences with a moat between them; the gateways are very small, and made like drawbridges. We have never before seen in these regions any place of equal strength or so well devised."

They were rich, says Juan Vásquez, making continuous war upon neighbours in order to steal gold and to take prisoners for sacrifice or to use as slaves. They were frank and truthful people, but quarrelsome; the women did all the work of the fields, and accompanied the men to war. They had quantities of food—maize, beans, fruit, mountain pigs, tapirs, deer, and fish from the rivers; they used hammocks, and had plenty of excellent pottery and fine cotton garments.

With the reduction of these Pacific tribes to his credit, Vásquez returned to Garcimuñoz, and presently had the satisfaction of receiving the adherence of nine or ten caciques of the central valleys and mountains. In June, 1563, he explored the lovely Guarco valley, and there chose the site for the city of Cartago, to which the citizens of Garcimuñoz, complaining that their city was sterile and wind-tormented, begged to remove; and then went to Nicaragua to get more provisions, horses, and settlers.

Returning at the end of the year, with a ship from Realejo, he sent Spaniards up to the central plains, and himself continued south to the mouth of the Rio Grande de Terraba, where he named the little port of Coronado, landed, and commenced an inland expedition with his eyes fixed upon the golden vision of Veragua, across the mountains. Luckily, the Quepo and Coto people, conquered in his previous expedition, remained friendly, and in fact spread his good fame abroad, so that when

the Spaniards had painfully crossed the Sierra de Talamanca, he was well received by the tribes of the Atlantic slope. Here was found the Estrella River (Changuinola, or Tilorio) with gold-bearing sands that immediately revived hopes of enormous wealth; its length was parcelled out, with sections discreetly reserved for the King, the President of the Audiencia of Guatemala, and the padre Rávago, and gold-washing actively carried out by the expert Negro slaves of Vásquez de Coronado. In the lovely vale of Coaza, scene of the disasters of Hernan Sanchez de Badajoz, the Spaniards who had had experience in Mexico recognized, in an enclave of people whom the indigenous tribes called "Strangers," a colony of Nahuatl-speakers.

Throughout all this region of Old Talamanca the conciliatory captain received the allegiance of tribal chiefs, and eventually made his way along the coast, from near Bocas del Toro, avoiding the eastward-running ranges of the backbone cordilleras, to the valleys of the Matina and Reventazón, and through them to the central plateau where stood the newly-built city of Cartago. He arrived to this colony, where practically all the settlers of Costa Rica were now congregated, in May, 1564; he then went to Spain, to set the facts before the King, and in April, 1565, received the hereditary title of Adelantado of Costa Rica, and the Governorship of the Province. Fired by his enthusiastic stories, half a hundred Spaniards, many rich and noble, joined him in the fleet that sailed from San Lucar in early October; but a storm off Cadiz wrecked the ship of the Adelantado, and he and all his friends perished.

Before the new Governor, the seventy-five-year-old "Perafan" de Ribera, arrived from Honduras in 1568, the Indians had risen in all directions, and the wretched settlers of Cartago were practically besieged in the church; the Governor brought men and provisions, and 400 head of cattle, driven from the grass lands of Choluteca, but such help was a temporary sop. What was needed for a successful Spanish colony was either gold in quantity, with which Negro slaves could be bought, or docile Indians, who would till the soil and act as servants; the difficulties of a Governor in dealing with his discontented citizens were not lessened by the rapid appearance of another

element or rather, two :—the mestizo, child of a Spanish father and Indian mother, and the mulatto, of mixed Spanish and African blood. Nearly three generations had passed since the first settlement of Europeans upon the island of Española ; nearly two since the conquest of Mexico and settlements upon the mainland of the Caribbean ; and in that time there were already grandfathers among the mestizos, a new race which neither showed loyalty to Spain nor, strangely enough, kindness to the Indian. Lack of sympathy was as conspicuous in Central America as, for instance, in São Paulo in Brazil, where the mixed-blood "mamelucos" were the most unrelenting harriers of the Indians of the interior.

Costa Rican settlers demanded the repartition of the Indians, according to the iniquitous system invented by the cold-hearted Columbus, a system that had already led to the ruin and disappearance of the population of most of the West Indian islands, and had reduced the native folk of Mexico and Guatemala to dumb slavery ; but certain of the religious Orders whose members proselytized in the New World (chiefly Franciscans, Dominicans, Mercenarians, Jesuits, Augustines and Carmelites) made a strong stand against this destruction of the native races, the famous Father Bartolomé de las Casas advocating as a remedy and substitute the introduction of Negro slaves from the African West Coast. Tremendous religious controversies raged about the crux of the problem—the possession of souls ; we find grave pronouncements that the Africans had no souls, and might therefore be enslaved ; that the native Americans, being "true men," had souls and so should not be subject to slavery ; and exceptions in the latter rule being made as regards Caribs, because they were "cannibals." The only valid excuse for enslavement of the African, the fact that he was accustomed to slavery as a part of his social system, regarding it neither as hardship nor disgrace, was not usually put forward.

Following upon the strong protests of the clerics, with which the crown of Spain was in sympathy from the days of Isabella, the famous "New Laws" were promulgated, the Visitador (Inspector of the Inquisition) bringing them to Mexico in 1534, to the great inconvenience of the settlers ; but as the distri-

bution of the Indians by the encomienda system had already taken place twelve or more years previously, a semblance of compliance only was necessary.

In Costa Rica the case was different, for the bulk of the Indians, maintaining themselves independent in their mountains and forests, were very far from being the slaves of anybody; a series of campaigns, authorized and expensive, could not be conducted without publicity. So the colonists approached the Audiencia of Panama (since 1563, with jurisdiction over Costa Rica) for help, and this body, applying the new decrees, which declared the Indians to be direct dependents of the Crown, nevertheless assisted the conquistadores by prescribing the amount of tribute due from each Indian village, and assigning definite revenues to the Spanish settlers. But the settlers threatened to leave Costa Rica, and made, one morning at dawn, so dramatic a demonstration, mounted upon their horses, before the Governor's house, that he yielded to their demands. But he apportioned the good land, complained the Father Lorenzo de Bienvenida, among forty people, chiefly "mestizos, Negroes, and other low-class people," and gave the best Spaniards "nothing but rocks and forests."

The Governor quieted murmurs by starting another expedition towards Veragua, and in the course of a terrible two years' journey, accompanied by his aged, courageous wife, marched from Cartago to Almirante Bay, made and abandoned a settlement on the Estrella River, crossed the continent to the site of the present Davíd in the north-west of Panama Republic, and back by the Pacific coast, founding the ephemeral city of Nombre de Jesus, north of the Osa Peninsula, on the way. Next year, 1573, he threw up his post, leaving, says Fernández Guardia, but two Spanish towns in Costa Rica, "Cartago with forty families, Aranjuez with fifteen. The tremendous riches in gold upon which so many hopes had been founded were still undiscovered; and they are undiscovered to this day."

Not that the vision was abandoned. In 1574 a splendid expedition set out from Spain, headed by Diego de Artieda, who carried in three ships would-be settlers to the number of 335, destined for Costa Rica and chiefly for the colonization of the Estrella River region. One vessel was wrecked off

Nombre de Dios (Panama), another at the Belén River, and the other, followed by many men, for whom there was no room in the little ship, on foot through swamp and forest, was navigated up the San Juan River to Granada: for in addition to Artieda's status as Governor of Costa Rica for life, he had a four years' appointment as Governor of Nicaragua and Nicoya. Here he built more ships, with them explored the ill-fated coast near Almirante Bay, and founded a short-lived town on the Guaymí River. The appearance of Drake off the coast of Central America, in March, 1579, flurried the Audiencia and the local Governors into absorbed devotion to preparations by sea and land against the raider who had already put ports and vessels under contribution all the way up from the Strait of Magellan. Wrote Don Miguel de Eraso to King Philip:

"It is a thing that terrifies one, this voyage and the boldness of this low man, the son of vile parents (for it is said that his father was a shoe-maker). Yet it is a positive and accomplished fact that he undertook that navigation and came by that route."

Horrified eyes magnified Drake's little *Golden Hinde*, of 100 tons, into a "large vessel of 300 tons," and her guns into "twenty-five great pieces of heavy artillery"; she carried about eighty men, and loot to the value of 600,000 pesos, it was said.

Near the Isla del Caño, off the Osa Peninsula, Drake caught a vessel sailing from Costa Rica to Panama; on board were two pilots of the China Seas, with their maps and sea-charts, no doubt of great service in the subsequent passage of the *Golden Hinde* across the Pacific. But the Spaniards did not credit this intention, when they heard of it from the released pilots, and thenceforth the west coast was uneasy. Realejo, port of Nicaragua, was specially fortified, for there were ideas that Drake might return to the Atlantic by the lakes of Nicaragua; or that he might traverse the Isthmus of Panama, emerging at Vallano, near Nombre de Dios.

Valverde, President of the Guatemala Audiencia, writing to the King, said that Drake "carries with him for this purpose a Negro believed to be one of the natives of Vallano who went with the Englishmen six or seven years ago to the South Sea, at the time of the robbery of the mule-trains," thinking that the

always troublesome escaped Africans (the "Cimarrones") of Panama would help the English. "But he will have learned that the Negroes have made peace with the Audiencia of Panama," and so would probably not try that; and in any case the President regarded as very ominous the story that Drake had taken from Guatulco "the entire supply of Indian women's embroidered bodices," which clothing he must be planning to use to conciliate other Indians of the coast, "for he was not going to wear it, nor would it be of any utility in England. . . ."

But wherever Drake meant to go, it was vital to be upon the alert, and, with the coast to guard and defend, other plans dwindled. Artieda was for a time made Admiral of the defensive fleet, but, presently retiring, died in Guatemala. No other regular governor came to Costa Rica until 1595, and for many years the Indians of Talamanca were left alone; a trail to Panama via the present Panamanian province of Chiriquí, on the west coast, was precariously maintained, for fear of corsairs, but the fierce native tribes were equally menacing. In 1605 a new city was founded on the Caribbean, Santiago de Talamanca, but five years later it was abandoned on account of quarrels between the Spanish officials, despite the efforts of Don Gonzalo, son of the Adelantado Juan Vásquez de Coronado. In 1619, with Talamanca independent and uprisings in the buffer strip of Tierra Adentro, a big raid was made, and 400 Indians captured, brought to Cartago and forced to work; but the territories were left to themselves until, in 1662, the son of the Governor of Costa Rica made another attempt. Don Rodrigo Maldonado founded a new city, San Bartolomé, on the banks of the Tarire, and another, San Francisco, farther into the country; but all his plans were destroyed and his tactful conciliation of the Indians rendered useless, by the extraordinary and unexplained desertion of all his settlers, whom he was obliged to follow back to Cartago.

From that time until to-day, there has been set up no town of white people in the Talamanca region of Costa Rica. Nor, with the exception of the frail banana colony of Bocas del Toro, any attempt to draw riches from the Dukedom of Veragua. But there is still an Indian "King of Talamanca," whose portrait you can buy in any post-card shop in Costa

INDIANS LADEN WITH PALM THATCH, TALAMANCA

Rica. Seated upon a hammock on the veranda of a cane-walled hut, and dressed in shirt and trousers, the strong-jawed Talamancan displays upon his chest a necklace of golden eagles, insignia of his rank, as proudly as his ancestors displayed them to the eyes of Columbus 400 years ago.

CHAPTER XXII

BRITISH HONDURAS

Tropic Beauty—Belize—Civic Order—Negro and Indian—Regions outside Belize—El Cayo—Lubaantun—Stann Creek—The Guest-house—Belize and Canada.

THE first visit that I paid to British Honduras had a sound business origin. I was asked to make investigations into the possibilities of the colony as a supplier of certain vegetable products, and in the course of these inquiries, to discover the extent and resources of the cohune forest. In the course of this work, I went to the south of the colony, and up several of the rivers; and, living in a wooden house, airy and balconied, upon a silent bay which might have been Robinson Crusoe's own, a bay of white sand and palms, made a number of experiments with tropical fruit-drying as well as the cracking of the stony-hearted cohune nut. The story of those journeys, of those experiments, is too long to tell in these pages, but those months implanted a love for Central America, an enduring impression of its worth and beauty, that years of experience in all the other Central American countries have but deepened. Sunny countries, tropic woodland and rivers, were not new to me. I had travelled and lived in South Africa; I have since seen every country of South America and most of the West Indian islands; and the Nile; and still to me the jungle of British Honduras is the most beautiful tropic jungle, the rivers the loveliest tropic streams that heart could desire. They are the very realization of romance—the great, green, deep-flowing waters, overhung with fiercely-struggling creepers, huge buttressed trees draped with orchids, bordered with tree-ferns and lilies, alive with the gay colours of parrot and toucan. One forgets mosquito and

sand-fly, lack of bodily ease, the troubles of the unacclimatized wayfarer; all that remains are the splendid pictures of memory that nothing can take away.

The front door of British Honduras is the reef-sheltered Belize. From the sea Belize is extremely pretty. All the houses, built of wood, painted white, airily balconied, are raised on piles above gardens flaming with crotons and scarlet hibiscus. The wide, sun-drenched streets are shaded with enormous feathery flamboyants and the ever-rustling coco-nut palm, and from every available railing and veranda the trails of pink coralillo vine, bright blue convolvulus, orange tric-trac and violet "viuda alegre" drip and festoon themselves.

Against the shore and up the river, crossed by an arched bridge, lie numbers of little sail-boats, with here and there a sophisticated motor-launch, side by side with a long native pitpan or dory. All about and beyond the town are grassy savannahs and woodland that sweeps away into the deep surrounding forest; it is not until you go south that your grateful eyes are able to behold the transparent blue, boldly serrated crests of the Cockscombs, soaring clear above the sizzling heat of the sea coast.

This is an open roadstead. One lands from a launch, and once on shore discovers that the neat and flowery appearance is not belied by closer acquaintance. Belize is well kept, carefully policed. A new Government order has forbidden the opening of the public market on Sundays, so rigid is discipline. Perhaps too rigid, for Belize, like most tropic towns, buys its food from day to day, almost from meal to meal. I do not say that Belize is a model town; nothing so dull. There is insouciance and laziness; there is occasional but very little crime; there is none of the hopeless, standardless squalor of some other American tropics. Some of the cheerful, carefree coloured folk may fall from the standard, but at least there is something to fall from. With the exception of a few white families, nearly all of Government officials, the whole of the population is "coloured" in a greater or less degree, and is not only a self-respecting but an almost arrogantly respectable community.

Visitors from the southern states of the U.S.A., seeing the sights of Belize when the small steamers of banana companies make calls, shake their heads over this social condition. They are quite accustomed to the affectionate association of coloured women with white men, declaring impressively that there are "no *white* women of easy virtue in the South"; they see the gutters of their towns full of mushroom-hued children as a result. But it is shocking to them that the coloured mother should be a respectable married woman, the children honourable citizens. They ought to be outcasts subject to the Grandfather Clause, Jim Crow Car-System, and Lynch Law. This view, and its open expression, in part explains the American's lack of popularity in the tropical Americas, and his inability to get along with, or govern, dark-skinned races. To him there is "no good Indian but a dead Indian"; while the American Negro is . . . what the North American has made him.

The truth is that where whites and dark-skinned folk live in close contact a certain amount of mixing will always take place, whether the bulk of the whites or the bulk of the dark folk like it or not. Perhaps the basic reason of British success in overseas government is due to sympathetic understanding and genuine kindness for dark-skinned people; here in the Caribbean even the difficult period following the abolition of slavery was surmounted without mutual bitterness, in a manner that left the coloured populations respected, self-respecting and loyal, fitted for a share in the business of government. The British may well congratulate themselves upon the result. The British coloured people of the Caribbean have developed into an invaluable element without whose aid the daily work of these shores could not be carried on. No one owes them more gratitude than the companies from the United States who use their strong arms, their irreplaceable labour, to create banana and sugar plantations for the piling up of American fortunes.

And while we are on the subject of British West Indians in North American employment, let me recall a little scene. It was during the time of the construction of the Panama Canal, where the Barbados and Jamaican Negroes performed the

chief part of the manual work, after many other sources of labour had been tried with disastrous results—including American Negroes from New Orleans, who came with their razors and tried to beat up Colón; and Liberians, who arrived without "proper clothing," and took to the bush. Previously, in railway construction days, Chinese had been introduced; and, one night, the whole colony committed suicide. But the West Indians worked well, after their American overseers had been drilled into refraining from swearing at them. But they loved a grievance, and would, when well armed with a complaint, take it to the genial and long-suffering Sir Claud Mallet, and if a reply did not come quick enough, would write to the Secretary of State in London, and next to the King. Near Culebra one day we were out for a canal picnic, and after lunch observed a terrific, head to head, fierce whispering amongst the three West Indian house-boys accompanying us. Somebody said idly that he'd bet they were quarrelling over card-games; someone else said he thought sweethearts always predominated as a subject; and out of sheer curiosity one of the big fellows was called over. "What's the discussion about, Jim?"

Jim twiddled his hat, grinning modestly. "Well, sir; well, sir, the fact is we was just having a little argument about the apostolic succession."

It is true that this happened on a Sunday. On the same evening I went to church in Colón. The little stone building was crammed with marvellously-dressed coloured belles. Pink and blue satin, ostrich plumes, fans, white kid gloves, cascades of chiffon, met the eye in every direction. For all the men were earning good money on the Canal. For none of this glory did the capable, jolly Father Cooper care a straw; at the end of the announcements for the week he leant from the pulpit and tongue-lashed that congregation for its good.

"There will," said he, "be in future no such scenes as there were this afternoon. You know the rule perfectly well. The children of respectably married women can be brought to this church for christening on Sundays at three o'clock. And no others. The other babies can be brought here on Wednesday evenings. So don't let us have any more misunderstanding."

We are far enough away from discreet Belize. Not that the

capital is without its church. On the contrary, there are churches of different sects on every street, and St. John's, the cathedral, is the centre of social life, is full at every service, with every one singing lustily in the boiling heat with the fervour of the true believer. The coloured people love religion, of almost any brand so long as there are enough emotional hymns; I am inclined to think that they enjoy the exactions of a definite religious law.

Belize has one hotel, the wooden barn of the International, now a really good hostelry, owned by the same enterprising gentleman who owns the electric light plant and who once also ran the weekly publication, the *Clarion*. This periodical is now reinforced by a Negro anti-government newspaper. Belize gets its near-news from Louisiana; journals of New Orleans are but two days old when they arrive, while those of London are at least two weeks on the way.

In the schools of Belize you may see now and again a child of the native races, result of a slow infiltration into British Honduras from the west by way of the Old (Mopan, or Belize) River, or from the base of Yucatan by way of the Hondo or the New River. Trouble over the border means a leakage into British territory, chiefly of Peteneros, but also of people from Santa Cruz and Balcalar, Mexican soil. Gann calculates that there must be at least 5,000 of these native Indians, all of Maya stock, but differing considerably in habits and traditions and speech.

From whatever part they come, however, the children stand out with startling distinctness from among the bright-eyed, brown-skinned little "Creoles" of African ancestry. These, the negroid youngsters, show a wide range of colour according to the degree of white admixture, but all possess the quick, observant, life-loving eyes, the restless limbs, with hands and feet inclined to spread, the round head with its mat of crinkly blue-black hair, the cheerful grin and ready word. Beside them the Indian child sits stolid. His small eyes have the flat, shallow, glazed appearance of a doll's eyes; his broad face of copperish-saffron tint is often tinged with brick red on the cheekbones; his nose is thin, with an aquiline tendency,

often to be noticed even in tiny babies; his hands and feet are delicate and small. His head runs up to a point, as if the Maya mother still flattened it artificially, and is thickly thatched with coarse, invariably straight, hair.

In the camps and villages where there is a local store, the Maya woman will buy cheap trade cloth and ready-made garments, and will presently be seen wearing blouse and skirt in place of the *guipil* and *pik*. But in the northern corner near Chetumal Bay they live as their forefathers lived.

It was in 1696 that the Franciscan friar, Alonzo Cano, wrote of the Maya:

"They clothe themselves with something like jackets with half sleeves, woven at intervals from top to bottom with stripes of various design incorporated in the same woof, very beautiful to see."

The Franciscan also remarked that they took their first morning drink hot, of water mixed with ground maize. Gann saw identical customs, very recently; a hot drink invariably, first thing in the day, ground maize and water, sweetened with honey; their solid meals, of tortillas, chile peppers, beans. Variations in the staple drink occur with different flavourings of berries and aromatic herbs from the bush, and the thickness or thinness of the powdered maize. Game from the woods, peccary, deer, and curassow, chiefly, is barbecued in order to preserve it; and the Maya will, at a pinch, eat constrictors and rattle-snakes; also into the pot go turtles' eggs, iguana; parrot; armadillo; gibnut; toucan and wari.

They are a hammock people. They migrate, seeking fertile land for new fields when one spot is exhausted, and frequently return to the sites of ancient cities, where the ground is almost invariably productive, although they will not excavate in the ruins, perhaps for fear of the spirits with which the air is full, or of the old stone and clay images with their power of coming back to life. Most Indians have transferred this clinging faith to the Roman Catholic saints. Gann says that the Maya of Northern British Honduras celebrate a corn-ripening ceremony during which the priest at the altar makes an invocation beginning:

"Now, my beautiful lady of the yellow-leaf bread-nut, as well as you, my handsome father San Isidro, tiller of the earth; as well as you, lord sun, who art seated at the east; as well as you, Chantupchac, who art seated in the middle of the heavens, in the east; as well as you, Yumchanchacub; I deliver to you, with the majestic servants in the middle of the heavens . . ."

A strange mixture of the Catholic with the Maya calendar. These people still use that extraordinarily widespread toy, the bull-roarer, and make their sandals of tapir hide. But they are not healthy, suffering from the prevalent American indigestion, as well as malaria.

And they have forgotten all about the ball-game of their hero-ancestors, the ball-game of Xibalba the underworld, whose cement courts are still to be seen at the ruins of Chichen-Itza. The young Maya boys of British Honduras have taken to cricket and football.

Beyond the ordered townishness of Belize lie other regions, as far apart in spirit as Exmoor is from London. There are the dense interior forests, with no access but by way of the rivers, and no means of ascending the rivers but the flat-bottomed pitpans and round-bottomed dories of the Creoles and "Caribs." There are the fine, cool heights of the mountains, rising above coco-nut and mangrove swamp, sugar and cacao plantations, pine-flats and "cohune ridge," delightful uplands where no one lives. And there are such smaller groups of population as El Cayo, the Orange Walks of two rivers; and Corozal; and Stann Creek.

Corozal is, as its name tells you, a place where "corozos" (*Attalea cohune*) grow. It is an Indian rather than a British-settled village, and its great charm is its proximity to a whole series of old Maya sites. You reach it by a coasting boat sailing up from Belize.

El Cayo is accessible by river boat and canoe up the Old (or Belize) River. It is no more than a cluster of thatched cottages set agreeably upon a grassy, rolling savannah, beside the river, here but an inconsequent stream. El Cayo looks through the foothills to the Guatemalan border and the mysterious depths of Petén.

Into the blue-veiled range of the Cockscombs at the back of

the forests few people have penetrated beyond the official surveyor on trips of duty, and an infrequent gold-hunter: but strung down the coast to the Guatemala border are plantations of coco-nuts and sugar and bananas, while the fine rivers of the colony are all highways by which mahogany is brought to shipping points. In the far south, near Punta Gorda, is the Toledo district, where, since the American War of Secession, a group of planters from the Southern States have been growing sugar; and in that same region, up the little Rio Grande, is a newly-discovered Maya site whose scientific opening-up is being carried out by the explorers Lady Brown, F. A. Mitchell-Hedges and Dr. Gann. This site is close to the Guatemalan frontier, consists of great truncated, terraced pyramids, in ruins, faced with blocks of cut stone (granite and limestone). No sculpture or stelæ have yet been found (at the date of writing, however, the forest has not been cleared from the pyramids), but it was ascertained that the remains run more than three miles north and south, and two miles east and west. The site has been named " Lubaantun " (literally, " fallen stones "), as the blocks have been torn from their places and tumbled fantastically by the age-long action of the forest vegetation.

The second largest town in the colony is Stann Creek, forty miles south of Belize and reached by schooner. This town possesses a railway, as Belize does not. The little single-track line that starts here was built not with the idea of serving the existing needs of the biggest developed regions of the colony, for these, ever since the days of the first logwood and mahogany cutters, have used the rivers as highways; the railway was constructed to open new territory and to develop the banana industry. Wherefore the track runs from Commerce Bight through light, sunlit woods, ranks of banana stems with their translucent jade leaves, and past the wooden houses of colonists, and, after accomplishing some twenty odd miles, almost due west, stops in the bush near green knolls and in the middle of delightful Central American jungle. Some day, declare the optimists, this line will join a system running north from Guatemala to Yucatan. But that day is not yet in sight.

Stann Creek is nothing but a single street. But such a

street! Between each wood-built house, handsome and veranda-surrounded, or a mere hut with half-clad coloured children laughing on the step, tropic bushes and trees intervene —here, a huge flamboyant, there a silk-cotton with its high-held crown of pure golden cups, or a blaze of scarlet hibiscus and a riot of mottled crotons; the path twists, crosses a tiny footbridge, past a comprehensive store where a Scots name surprises the landscape, and wanders gaily onwards until the woodland swallows it.

It once happened that I spent a week in Stann Creek. There was no hotel, exactly, but there was an efficient lady who accepted guests. She ran a store where you could buy cotton garments from Manchester, hardware from New Orleans, dried cod (*bacallao*, in Spanish Central America), dried foods from Spain and Portugal, wine in flasks; charcoal, maize, and so on. Behind the shop, occupying all the front of the building, a passage led to a back veranda where meals were served under the shade of wonderful blue and pink vines; the kitchen was an annex in the back-yard, a small wooden hut roofed with zinc, and also in the back-yard were the guest-chambers. Each guest or party enjoyed real privacy, too, for the apartments were separate erections, like dove-cotes, raised on legs above the yard, a slight outside stairway leading to the eyrie.

When I arrived and suggested myself as a guest, there was no empty room. The family of an American moving-picture man, lately and quite unnecessarily come to Stann Creek, was in possession of a two-roomed castle. A fever-stricken Irishman employed on the railway had another; and a travelling Syrian, depressed because Stann Creek did not seem to want his silks and sandalwood, the third. But before sundown the carpenter had set up another pigeon-loft among the big mango-trees. The windows were square openings in the plank walls, closed against the fierce midday sun by wooden shutters. Cut from the heart of sweet-smelling "cedars," or from enormous trunks of ceiba or mahogany, the nakedness of the wooden walls had a dignity of its own. Long strings of ripe mango fruit, rose and apricot, hung by the opening, and from this high perch one beheld the whole expanse of the village and

the Caribbean shore of Stann Creek with its perfect turquoise water glittering in the sunlight.

In that day Stann Creek looked forward to prosperity; the big banana company of the Caribbean was developing plantations along the route of the railroad, and if it looked sourly upon any other firm that dared to think of handling this indigestible vegetable, at least it provided a market for small planters—while the said planters remained submissive.

Later on, the inevitable happened and disease appeared. The number of banana bunches dwindled, the plants were blighted, and, since there is no certain cure for the "Panama disease," Stann Creek's activity was paralysed. Steamers began to pass by, the Scotch store was closed, and the train runs but once a week from Commerce Bight into the forest. It doesn't matter very much; perhaps, not at all. There is no hurry: and a sweeter journey than can be made in a train is still to be made by dory up the deep, silent-flowing green rivers, bordered with tree-fern and drooping tillandsia.

But, early in 1924, Stann Creek provided a new sensation for the colony when considerable masses of the black sands, long known to exist, were reported as containing tin in commercial quantities. These deposits occur chiefly along old river valleys and may yet prove the base of another home industry of great importance for the colony.

As regards business, horizons were enlarged for Belize traders when Canada brought into operation the Trade Agreement arranged with the West Indies in 1922, and sent Canadian Government ships into the Caribbean to traffic with the various British colonies, all of which have for some years been in a rather precarious condition of dependence upon the United States. The results present an illustration of the success of systematic inter-Empire linking. For instance: from April to September of 1922, before the agreement had come into force, British Honduras sent Canada 7,000 Canadian dollars' worth of merchandise; from April to September of 1923 British Honduras sent goods worth $100,000.

At the same time Canada doubled her sales to British Honduras; and the United States showed her realization of the

situation by immediately reducing freight rates on flour to Belize.

The case of the British colonies of the Caribbean is one in which the need for Empire co-ordination is sorely needed. The British Isles get tropical supplies from so many regions, and remain so fondly wedded to free trade, that the preferences necessary to help the West Indies, and British Honduras and Guiana, are not arranged to meet colonial requirements. Frequently, the sugar and tobacco, coffee and fruits of these delightful and precious outposts go a-begging. And, with the aspiration of Wall Street to make an American lake of the Caribbean pressing upon the planters, they have had to sell products to a certain limited list of companies, or risk the disciplining of which the Caribbean tells so many stories. The intervention of Canada is healthy and opportune; it is logical that the northern brother should send manufactured goods—to say nothing of the inevitable, historic, almost ceremonial bacallao—in exchange for tropical products which her own soil can never yield.

I cannot resist giving, hastily and here, a scrap of statistics: in all this colony of 45,000 people, only 452 pay income tax.

CHAPTER XXIII

BRITISH HONDURAS IN HISTORY

A Hard-won Shore—Buccaneers and Logwood Cutters—Raiding Spanish Colonies—The Public Meeting—Attacks from Peten—Burnaby's Code—Taking of St. George's Cay—The First Superintendent—The Attack from Yucatan—Pork and Dough Boys' War—Place-names—The Forest.

BELIZE remembers a past of gallantry, tenacity, of almost ferocious romance. There is no descendant of the plucky band of settlers who stuck to and won their foothold upon this narrow border of the Americas without the best authority for pride.

Upon this strip of coast, actually south-east Yucatan, the Spanish never made the least attempt at colonization: they had a hard enough task to extract even nominal submission from the tribes of northerly Yucatan, and much of the wild, thickly-forested region behind British Honduras, the Petén region (politically part of Guatemala), is even to this day an undisturbed inheritance of the "unbaptized" Lacandones, a people who have never endured an alien ruler. The British Honduras strip, which Cortés actually touched on his celebrated journey in 1524–6, was left in Spanish Colonial times to the Chol and the Mopan tribes—and if the territory ever had a native name, it was that of the Mopan.

The British first appear in this region in history when in 1638 an English vessel was wrecked off Yucatan and the survivors wandered along the shore, finding food as the Indians found it. A few years later, in 1655, Cromwell laid the foundation of Britain's active interest in the Caribbean when he sent Admiral Penn to the West Indies with a strong fleet to seize what he could of the possessions of the enemy, Spain. Penn took

Jamaica, and Port Royal became the conveniently situated rendezvous for free-living buccaneers.

Not that this was the first seizure in Caribbean waters, by any means; there had been attacks upon and sackings of coast towns, interception and robbery of vessels, for a century: and in 1642 a band of English had captured Ruatan, one of the "Bay islands," off the coast of Honduras Republic. They were expelled by Spanish forces, but, a little later, Campeachy town, on northern Yucatan, was taken for a time.

All this was done chiefly with an eye to the vexation of Spain; but a deeper interest was added shortly afterwards when Captain James, carrying letters of marque, seized a Spanish vessel laden with logwood and brought the cargo to the Port of London. Dyes were scarce and expensive in those days: the fine red "brasil," colour of a brazier, that reached the British Isles from the Orient, had been cheapened by supplies of equally beautiful hue sold to the English cloth-makers by the Portuguese, who found this dye-wood in their Terra da Santa Cruz, afterwards called Brazil. For good black dyes there was an eager market; Captain James sold his cargo of logwood at the price of £100 per ton.

Thenceforth the buccaneers, raiding from their jolly headquarters at Port Royal, hunted for logwood-laden ships sailing from Campeachy and Coatzacoalcos as relentlessly as they had hunted for the silver fleet; and when the Treaty between Spain and England of 1667 put an end to privateering the bold raiders turned their swords into axes, went to the shores where the dye-wood trees grew, and cut the precious stuff for themselves. On the Campeachy coast they risked their liberty more than their lives, for they were already hardened to tropic fevers and poisonous insects and a life in the open where food was scant: the Spanish in Mexico kept a wary eye upon these forests, and, when they caught foreigners, dealt with them faithfully. Many a cutter of logwood, or of the mahogany that also sold at high prices for cabinet-making, ended his days as a prisoner in the silver mines of Mexico.

Against these menaces the logwood cutter had the protection of mobility, although, once landed, he stayed perforce in the

neighbourhood of the coast where friendly captains would presently call back with food and clothing supplies and an empty hold for the dye-wood; and his collecting point was an invitation to attack. But he was not without friends. There were the forest "Indians," with a tradition of hostility to the Spaniards, their nominal masters, always ready to help a Frenchman, a Dutchman or a Briton: and there were the cheerful African runaways, escaped from slavery to hide in the warm and fruitful woods beside a river-bank, who made common cause with the logwood cutters as with the buccaneers, helping to cut and carry and load. Womenfolk, native American or African, not infrequently could be found to cook for the camp, to help cultivate a patch of maize or cassava or beans, and tend the thatched hut where their lords swung in hammocks on feast-days. It is not surprising that there presently grew up the nucleus of a permanent population of mixed blood, acclimatized and tenacious.

Hard-bitten as the pirates, and not infrequently returning to piracy as a life less arduous and no more risky, the logwood and mahogany cutters nevertheless had their vanities and pleasures. On the social occasions when the ships called and money flowed freely the logwood men appeared in their leather jerkins and high boots, necessities in the tangled, snake-and-fly-infested forest, but smothered themselves in expensive perfume, and invariably carried a spray of the scented yellow flowers of the logwood in their hats. The price of such luxuries as Jerez wine, silk waistcoats, dried fruit and almonds, was of little account, and the ferociously hot shores of Campeachy must have witnessed some curious scenes when the end of the cutting season arrived.

The pact made between England and Spain in 1667 not only arranged for the cessation of "letters of marque," but as a certain compensation regularized the position of the mahogany hunters on the coast that is now British Honduras; for, although Spain might with reason demand that her occupation of Campeachy should be respected, there was no base for any similar claim on the south-east littoral of the peninsula. And by this time there was a tacit understanding, denied as a principle but accepted as a practical matter, that the other Euro-

pean countries might make settlements in such spots of the Americas as Spain and Portugal had ignored.

Not only were French, English and Dutch colonies established in North America without serious question, but the Guianas were occupied, while Spain agreed to the English right of conquest over certain West Indian islands; to permit the existence of foreign mahogany cutters and shippers near Belize was to accept an accomplished fact, despite recurrent denials of sovereignty. As a matter of fact, by the Godolphin Treaty signed a few years later Spain ceded perpetual sovereignty over territory in the Americas or West Indies at that time occupied by the British, and it is difficult to understand why, soon afterwards, Spain took umbrage at the rapid increase of settlers on the Cays, drawn here by the promise of the Treaty. Seven hundred white colonists arrived, among them that famous Admiral whose memory is preserved in Benbow Creek. By 1700 the Cays were flourishing; 6,000 tons of logwood a year was being shipped, bringing £16 to £40 a ton, and the colony was able to buy slaves.

The next event was an attack from Petén, the Spanish authorities, unable to endure the near presence of heretics, sending a force down the Old River. The settlers got wind of the expedition, set watches on the river, built a fort at "Spanish Look-out," and made so brave a show that the force returned to Petén without striking a blow.

By this time St. George's Cay, in touch with Jamaica, active, flourishing, sheltered a strong colony whose body corporate presently developed a form of government peculiar to itself. What is more, this system operated with simplicity and success. Every year a public meeting of the citizens chose, from amongst themselves, seven magistrates, to whose hands was entrusted the executive and financial offices; legislation was a matter for the public meeting alone; and the youngest magistrate was always the coroner. About the middle of the century, however, there were sent out from England two Commissioners, to examine, report upon and exercise authority over the British colonies in Central America; these were Robert Hodgson and William Pitt. Probably because they found the British Honduras group so decisively and satis-

factorily governed, the Commissioners spent little time here, proceeding to the Mosquito Coast, over which, with Ruatan also, their powers extended. There is still to be seen, upon the coast of the Republic of Honduras, a little cluster of graves, with the carved stone over the last remains of "Billy Pitt"; they mark a forgotten attempt at colonization. For both Pitt and his fellow-commissioner identified themselves for many a long year with the fortunes of the region, and rank as pioneers of development work. The plan of a canal across Nicaragua was a tremendous incentive.

In 1754 the authorities of Guatemala again collected forces in the Petén, with head-quarters at Tayasal Island in the Lake of Petén; this was to be a definite expulsory blow, and when the force crossed the border and marched towards the British settlement it counted 1,500 men. But they had no better luck against the hard-bitten wood-cutters: these, with their faithful slaves, met and summarily disposed of the expedition. Another interregnum of peace, heralded by the Treaty of Paris in 1763, between Spain and England, secured the position of the settlers once more, although there were still quarrels on the border and pinpricks from the Spanish Governor of Yucatan, counterbalanced by the protection which the English Governor of Jamaica extended to Belize. Two years later Admiral Burnaby was on the spot looking into the whole question of boundaries and rights: with him was the celebrated Captain Cook, and before they left the shores of the little colony the two navigators drew up a code of laws, the passionately-defended "Burnaby's Code," which became something like a Bible to the settlers.

In 1779 England and Spain were at war again, and on both sides the far-away colonies bore the brunt. St. George's Cay, part of the series of coral reefs and islands that form a coastal barrier in these regions, lying some ten miles from the mainland, was still the chief point of concentration for the settlers' wooden houses, and against it came a Spanish naval force with such suddenness that the available defence was overwhelmed, the town burnt, and a number of families were taken prisoner to the great fortress of Havana. All who escaped made their way south to the island of Ruatan or to the Mosquito Coast.

The tables were turned in the same year, when a British force seized Omoa, off the coast of what is to-day the Republic of Honduras, following up this stroke by an attack upon Nicaragua in 1780, via the San Juan River. Three years later, with peace restored by the Treaty of Paris, the colonists of St. George's Cay were released from Cuba, and, setting about the rebuilding of their town, decided to establish it upon the mainland. They chose the site of the present Belize, actually a delta formed by the double mouth of the forest-bordered Belize River, where a camp of mahogany men had long existed. The first Superintendent, Colonel Edward Despard, was now appointed by the Governor of Jamaica, and he, bringing back as many as he could of the families who had retreated to Mosquitia, erected the first Governmental residence, at the point known since the early wood-cutting days as the Haulover. All the houses were carefully stockaded, against any new attacks; and by 1787 the town had been laid out in lots of 50 by 100 feet, colonists choosing their sites by ballot. To the new and none too strong settlement the British Government offered a shipload of convicts; in vain. The hardy and independent, self-respecting spirit of the settlement was set firmly against any such contribution. It was likewise somewhat chafed by the visible existence of a Superintendent and conformity to the laws of Britain; they wanted Burnaby's Code back, and clung determinedly to their seven magistrates elected at the yearly meeting. They were inclined to look a trifle askance both upon Mother England and Godmother Jamaica. But any small irritation of this sort was forgotten when, in 1798, a thrill went through the colony at the news that a terrific onslaught was being prepared against Belize by the Spanish authorities in Yucatan and Campeachy.

Belize called to Jamaica for help, sent the women and children out of the town, and set up all available land guns at the mouth of the river, the Haulover, and on St. George's Cay; the Superintendent, Colonel Barrow, at this moment reaped the harvest of the settlers' ancient tradition of broad if rough and ready justice to their dark-skinned helpers. For not only did the African slaves and the groups of mulattos again

cheerfully demonstrate their courage and loyalty, but the native races rose to the occasion in the defence of little Belize.

Such soldiers as could be spared from the West Indian islands were hastily shipped across, but the biggest vessel available was the eight-gun brig *Merlin*; the defenders had two sloops able to carry one eighteen-pound gun each, a couple of schooners, carrying one nine-pounder each, and seven flat-boats, with one gun each: but as invaluable eyes they had a flotilla of scouting dories of these excellent watermen the Caribs, who ranged the reefs just as when Columbus encountered one of these sea-going dug-outs on the same coast in the year 1502. They were out in all weathers, day after day and week after week, until at last the Spanish attacking force was sighted.

The appearance of this fleet was formidable. Field-Marshal O'Neil, the Spanish Governor of Yucatan, sent fourteen sail of the line and a strong flotilla of flat-boats: no less than thirty-two vessels all told, carrying 3,000 men aboard for the reduction of Belize. But these numbers sent by sea no more availed the attackers than previous forces sent by land; the dories and the single guns, the courage and resource of the defenders put the Spanish fleet to flight, in a sea-fight that deserves a bigger place in the history of colonization. Thenceforth the colonists of Belize claimed an additional right, that of conquest, to their original right of first settlement. From this month of September of 1798 there was no further question raised by Spain of the status of Belize, and presently the northern limits were agreed as lying on the banks of the Hondo River, while the Sarstoon River formed the southern boundary. The definite line of the western edge became later, in 1860, the subject of a convention between the Governments of Great Britain and the Republic of Guatemala, when a line was drawn from the head-waters of the Hondo to Garbutts' Falls on the Sarstoon.

In the annals of Belize, the fight of 1798 figures as the "War of the Pork and Dough Boys"; for then, as a century previously and still to-day, the Negro worker's inevitable rations include five pounds of pork and seven pounds of flour a week, as well as tobacco and sugar. It is a Caribbean Negro habit. Once upon a time, well-meaning employers in Jamaica tried to introduce a more varied and more healthful diet, dealing

out part of the ration in potatoes. The Negroes would have none of it: the attempt nearly caused a revolt, and the injured men paraded the streets of Kingston singing a song with a refrain:

> "Me don't want no cut-up pertaters,
> Give me me dumpling, boy!"

And in the ferocious, scorching, steaming heat of the Caribbean shores he still boils this pork and flour dumpling and is happy.

The place-names of British Honduras are eloquent of the colony's history. The word Honduras is of course borrowed from the Spanish, the early discoverers giving the appellation of "the Depths" or the "Deep places" to the great indentation of the coast where Spanish Honduras, British Honduras and Guatemala meet. Belize is sometimes derived from the name Wallis, a great buccaneer of the seventeenth century: but it seems more likely that it came straight from the Spanish *baliza*, a buoy (the term "la Baliza" frequently being applied to the buoyed point of a riverine or sea opening), or its French kin, *balise*. Survivals of Spanish appellations are found, chiefly in the north, where Yucatan influence is felt . . . Corozal, San Esteban, Santa Elena, or in the extreme south, where Punta Gorda's "Big Point" shelters a Carib village. Many Maya Indian names survive, particularly the names of rivers—the Yalbac, Sibun, Sarstoon, Sittee, and of little native settlements hidden in the interior bush.

But the Briton will be interested in the uncompromising British names, most of them surviving from the early days of mahogany and logwood cutters and buccaneers. Here is Young Gal Bank, Boom Town, Free Town, Cabbage Ridge, Orange Walk, Irish Creek, Revenge Lagoon, Fireburn, Faber's Lagoon, The Well, Jonathan Point; among the coral islands and reefs off the coast are Ambergris Cay, Cay Corker, Cay Chapel, Three Corner Cay, Lighthouse Reef, Glover's Reef, Tobacco Cay: all old haunts of the bold hunters of the Spanish galleons, an interminable maze of little sun-stricken, palm-fanned, breezy islets.

Stann Creek is said to derive its name from Saint Anne;

but signs of the newly refound tin deposits have been seen for centuries, and it is possible that this name comes from the Spanish "estaño," tin; the Latinism of the buccaneers is doubtful, or one might even suggest Stannus Creek as the old name.

From the ports of British Honduras are still shipped the squared logs of mahogany, and, desultorily and according to market prices, the twisted little crimson-hearted trunks of logwood. Chicle comes out from the Petén and extreme southern Yucatan by way of the Old River (from El Cayo), and from Corozal, for shipment to the United States and Canada, so that chewing-gum may give stenographers the right amount of mastication for their money. A few feathers, skins, a little rice and sugar; and coco-nuts. Bananas have faded practically out of the export lists, vanilla is scarcely worth the trouble of collection, cocoa has little encouragement. There should be room in the frosty regions of the world for well-cultivated mangoes and citrus fruits, guavas and sweet pine-apples, from Belize. But a colony that has made its fortune on the generous, adventurous industry of hardwood cutting does not take so kindly to other means of making a living.

Not that mahogany is the only noble tree felled for export; there is the splendid cocabola, the ceiba, "ironwood," "button-wood," sapodilla, and the kinky, tough little sea-grape. But mahogany means, still means, good money, and you can find in Belize the expert hunter of trees who goes alone into the deep interior forests, searching, with his machete as his passport, in the tangled woodland for the buttressed monster rising 80 and 100 feet into the air. In these tropical forests there may be from 100 to 200 different kinds of trees; there are few examples of social groups, although here in Central America's Atlantic slope are two of the most remarkable examples: yellow pine flats, in long and delightful stretches and the famous "cohune ridge" where the regal Attalea cohune spreads its magnificent fronds in green vaultings, interlaced like some cathedral roof made of trees. Both cohune ridge and pine flats are almost clear of undergrowth, and you may ride your horse through regular lanes of filtered sun-

light, treading the vegetable detritus of a thousand years.

In the great forest tangle where mahogany is cut the logs are invariably brought to a river margin, and there started on a journey of perhaps 200 miles. Down-stream, at certain old-established points, are the booms, where heavy chains across the stream check and pile up a tremendous collected mass of timber—a splendid sight. To this point come the mahogany men, sorting their logs, and thence rafting them to the sea. One still hears tales of a single tree that gave so many thousands of square feet of fine wood that it was worth 1,000 golden pounds.

If you go to the walled, white, spacious Government House in Belize and prove yourself a worthy person you may get concessions to hunt for all sorts of interesting things in the forests of British Honduras; I still possess a document granting me leave to take cohune nuts from Crown lands. But luckily, seeing turpentine-makers at work on the pine flats and coco-nut growers on the sandy shores, and with a long history of hard-wood cutters in the archives, the Government of Belize has now measured and set aside two large reserves, where plants and trees, birds and wild four-footed creatures may dwell and breed in peace.

Here the forest guards the Indian path, fences it with tall buttressed trees, marks it with a row of lush lilies and wiry palmettos, nets it with a tangled screen of heavy-scented vines, curtains and shades it with the fretted leaves of air-plants painted with rose and ivory.

Day by day, month by month and year by year the long green vista of the Caribbean forest is yours; winter brings no change, and even the heavy downpour of the rainy season makes less difference here than in the sun-scorched open. There will be no cession of place until some silent forest fight ends in a strangling, and the stronger growth shakes out its leaves over its victim. Hardly is there any change between day and night in the dim recesses of those cool avenues, and then the chief, the astonishing alteration is not a matter of sight but of sound.

For the oncoming march of evening brings back or rouses the whole hidden population of the forest, so that what was a

vista of majesty and magnificence steeped in almost perfect silence and immobility is suddenly alive. Just before sundown the flocks of green parrots that have spent the day at distant feeding-grounds return, scolding, boasting, exchanging gossip and insults; toucan and egret, haunters of the water margins during the daytime, seek deeper shelter; troupial and bell-bird call their clear and lovely night-song; the insect tribe wake from the doze of high noon and hunt for food; ocelot and puma and jaguar, mountain cow and peccary, all the little cats and rodents that have lain sleeping and concealed from sunrise to sunset, move through the undergrowth.

Howler monkeys yell in a deafening chorus from the upper branches of the tallest trees; the owl flits and calls from dusky hiding-places. All night long the forest is alive with movement and noises. Before dawn, all the small birds wake. Peals of bright sound, trills and cascades of delicate notes, rise through the dark leaves, where a million flower-cups turn their faces above the forest to the sky. All the forest trembles with gay sound for a half-hour, until the sun floods the pale arch with pink light; then one by one the singers fall silent, preparing for the adventures of the day, seeking their feeding-grounds in some more open spot. The trail through the forest is again left silent and solitary but for the eternally busy leaf-cutting ant and the heavy-winged butterfly searching for water.

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